Everything Nice

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Everything Nice

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Summary

"When was the last time you felt truly carefree, Will?" Hannibal asked, ignoring Will's remarks. "How old were you?"

Eight.

The thought came to him unbidden, immediate. Eight years old.

Hannibal offers Will a safe place to relax, and allow himself to be small, loved, and cared for. But it's as far from Will Graham, the FBI agent that they could possibly get.

Notes

This is a story about Littlespace, which involves some sexual play but is mostly for catharsis and safety. We will tag the chapters that involve sexual content to warn you.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

It started with something small, a completely innocuous comment. It wouldn't have started at all if Will wasn't a perpetually sarcastic little shit.

Will came home with a thickly bandaged arm, a graze from a bullet that had barely even touched him. It had already been dealt with by EMTs, hadn't even required a hospital visit. But of course, Hannibal would never be satisfied with someone else's inferior patchwork.

"Sit still," he demanded, when Will began to fidget again. Will rolled his eyes, biting back a hiss as Hannibal cleaned the graze with a damp cotton ball.

"It was fine the way it was."

"It wasn't even cleaned properly," Hannibal argued.

At the time, Will had been teasing. He was always doing that, picking at Hannibal, affection showing through playful remarks and jokes.

"It'll be *fine* . I'm not a little girl anymore, Daddy."

How could he have known where such an off handed joke would lead?

"No," Will laughed, entirely helpless in it. It was a week later and Hannibal was standing in front of Will holding up a - "Victorian oversized doll dress? Not really my, uh, *style* , Hannibal."

"Isn't it?" Hannibal asked him, lifting an eyebrow. Will drew the flat of his finger against his lips over and over, face flushing the longer he looked. He knew Hannibal well, now, he knew when he was joking. And he wasn't joking.

"You actually want me to wear this?"

"I certainly didn't buy it for me, Will." Hannibal replied, moving to drape the dress with a flutter over the arm over the couch. "But for my little girl."

Will snorted. "You're not serious, Hannibal, come on."

Hannibal moved to sit next to him on the couch. "What about it scares you?"

"I'm not scared," Will shrugged. "I'm confused."

"I like to take care of you," Hannibal said. He made it sound simple. Straightforward. Maybe to him it was. To Will, it was a churning mess of emotion.

"I don't need you to take care of me."

“We do a great many things we don’t need to do. I don’t need to go to the opera. You don’t need to tie fishing lures.” He reached for Will’s hand, taking it gently. “We do them because we enjoy them.”

Will eyed the dress skeptically. A deep blue, with more lace trimmings than Will thought one dress warranted, it was still not the worst outfit Will had ever seen. Or worn. “You’ll enjoy this?”

“I believe we both will.” Hannibal pulled Will’s hand up to his lips, brushing a kiss across the knuckles. “And if we don’t, we need never mention it again.”

Will picked up the dress. It was softer than he’d expected it to be, but also heavier. The fabric was thick, and there turned out to be several layers to the skirt. It buttoned up the back in a dozen tiny buttons he’d never be able to do up on his own. “So what, you want to fuck me while I’m wearing it?”

Hannibal cupped Will’s cheek gently. “Why don’t we get it on you, and we’ll see where it goes?”

Will swallowed, nodding.

They had played together almost since the moment they started seeing each other properly. Officially. But this was absolutely out of left field for them both. Will had expected that if this was a proclivity for either of them they would start small. Smaller.

Panties maybe? Lingerie? But a fully appointed, most likely historically accurate Victorian *gown* for a young girl, sized up to fit Will’s almost-six-foot form?

That was unexpected.

But then again, this was Hannibal. Hannibal who had a centerpiece for his dinner table made by professionals in Ikibana and ice sculpting. Hannibal who wore three-piece suits to go to the grocery store. Hannibal who went out of his way to give Will joy and pleasure.

Perhaps not entirely unexpected. Just surprising.

He stood from the couch and started with his pants. There was no point heading up stairs to get changed when he wouldn’t be able to button the damn thing up. And it wasn’t as though Hannibal had never seen him naked. The thought quirked Will’s lips and he gave Hannibal a soft look as he shucked his shirt next, tossing it on top of his pants in a pile on the couch.

He kept his socks and his underwear and took a deep dramatic breath before taking the dress up.

“How do I -”

“You step into it,” Hannibal explained, “pull it up to your hips, then slip your arms into the sleeves. I’ll help you with the buttons.”

“Yeah you’ll have to,” Will told him, holding the dress low enough to step into. He couldn’t even see the floor through the layers upon layers of frills and fluff. Carefully, he pulled the dress up, sliding his arms into the sleeves.

Snug, but not in an uncomfortable way. More like it had been made exactly to fit Will’s measurements, which was a bit uncomfortable to think about. It made him wonder if Hannibal had been considering costumes for… a *while.*

Hannibal came up behind him, his agile fingers working the row of tiny buttons, slowly but surely sealing Will into the dress. A dress he would not be able to take off without help. Like a child.

It was so unbearably intimate that Will’s chest ached.

“There we go,” Hannibal whispered softly, close enough to make him shiver.

It was surprisingly comfortable. Neither tight nor itchy, as he’d expected it to be. It fell to about mid-calf, and looked ridiculous with an adult man’s hairy legs and long socks. Really, Hannibal should have gotten him stockings to- Will hit the brakes on that train of thought right there.

Despite the jarring juxtaposition, Hannibal wrapped an arm around his waist and pressed a kiss to Will’s temple. “Such a pretty little girl. Come sit with Daddy.”

They sat, Will with his face burning red-hot, heat swirling in his belly. Hannibal pulled him in to rest against his shoulder, running gentle fingers through his hair.

“Just like this,” he said, “For now, let’s just sit and get used to it.”

Will swallowed thickly. “For now?”

“Eventually, there are other things we might like to try. Little ones get bored if not allowed to play.”

"So you do want to fuck me in this."

Hannibal hummed, a sound as much amused as mildly irritated. "Perhaps, if we both decide that is where we want this to go. But I meant it rather more literally."

He continued to stroke Will's hair as Will sat stiffly on the couch. He had no idea what Hannibal wanted from him. He didn't know if this was a kind of roleplay that got Hannibal off, or a test to see if Will would actually allow this… he had no clue and that felt uncomfortable. In their games they always discussed openly what each of them wanted.

"You want me to play with toys?" Will asked after a while, hands fiddling in his lap. "Do you want me to act like a little kid, too?"

"It isn't about what I want, per se."

"I'm drawing a blank, here," Will admitted, shifting to cross his legs and frowning at how *loud* the skirt was when he did. "I have no idea what you want me to do like… this."

"I want you to be yourself."

Will made a sound in his throat that *felt* sarcastic. Hannibal continued playing with his hair as he spoke.

"I want you to allow yourself to be vulnerable and for me to take care of you. Consider it an exercise in catharsis, if you will."

"But why *this* ?" Will asked, unnecessarily taking up the skirt to let it fall down again. "You can take care of me when I'm a grumpy shit dressed in my own clothes. I don't understand why the theatrics with all of this."

"Do you realize," Hannibal said quietly, bending to take Will's legs and bring them up over his lap, holding Will closer as he sat back. "That you're being very defensive? Something about his either very much troubles you or very much does not, and you're unsure which frightens you more."

"And now you're psychoanalysing me." Will sighed, bringing a hand up to his face to rub his eyes. "Just tell me plainly, what is this about? I don't care if it's a kink of yours, or a joke to catch me out, I just -"

"When was the last time you felt truly carefree, Will?" Hannibal asked, ignoring Will's remarks. "How old were you?"

Eight.

The thought came to him unbidden, immediate. Eight years old. At nine, his father’s drinking had worsened and Will had needed to pick up the slack. At ten, he lied about his age to get a paper route. It had all been downhill from there.

Hannibal nodded at the faint flush across Will’s cheeks. “We’ve created a partition. Will Graham, the adult, can go to work, deal with crime scenes, have all the stress of the day. But when you come home, you have trouble leaving that behind. Better to strip it all away, to trick your mind by removing any remnants that might distract you.”

He had a point. It was difficult for Will to think about corpses when he was distracted by the lace he was picking at. “So this is your way of creating a clean slate for me?”

“And allowing you the freedom to relax, to let someone else handle things for a change.”

Will sighed again, dropping his head back down against Hannibal’s shoulder. He almost wished it had been a weird sex thing. He was better at weird sex things than at *relaxing*. “How often do you want to do this?” He mumbled. “Because it’ll look weird if I don’t start shaving.”

“This isn’t about me, Will,” Hannibal reminded him softly, cupping the back of Will’s head to guide him to press his face to Hannibal’s neck. “This is about you. How often do you want to

do this?”

Will made a fussy sound and relaxed his entire weight against Hannibal. What if he didn’t want to do this? What if this was too much for him? Too strange? Too… ridiculous?

What if it was just what he needed?

“What will we do?” Will asked after a while, bringing a hand up to fiddle with the lace of his dress again. “I have no idea how to relax, Hannibal, not unless you fuck me senseless and you don’t seem to want to do that right now.”

Hannibal nuzzled his hair. “You knew once,” he pointed out. “When you were younger, when you were carefree. You just need to remember how.”

Will snorted. “How?”

“Playing,” Hannibal listed. “With your dogs, your toys. Drawing, reading with me, taking naps.”

Will snorted again. “Seriously?” but his voice was tighter now, no longer as snarky as he wanted to sound. Whatever this was, Hannibal was aiming true and Will hated it as much as he wanted to give into it.

“Also by letting me make decisions for you,” Hannibal added. “On bathing, dressing, eating. Your only requirement is to let me. Trust, in its entirety.”

“Gonna braid ribbons into my hair too?” Will asked. The derision he’d been trying for was mysteriously absent. Some of it sounded… nice. Not the ribbons part, that was definitely meant to be sarcasm, but reading with Hannibal, letting Hannibal bathe him… Naps sounded fantastic, though he wasn’t sure he was capable of them.

“If you like.” Hannibal’s fingers found a knot, gently untangling it and then scratching lightly against his scalp. This, Will could get used to. A quiet cuddle on the couch, a hand in his hair. He could want those things.

“Okay,” he decided. “Alright. I guess I have to shave my legs from now on.”

“Not if you don’t want to,” Hannibal assured him. “I confess, the aesthetic of it all works for me either way.”

Will snorted, kicking his socked foot forward so the dress slid up his calf. “It looks ridiculous, Hannibal. I’m shaving my legs.”

“Do you want me to do that for you, sweetheart?” Hannibal asked him, drawing his palm over Will’s foot and up his leg, just holding him there. Will pushed up against him, not to kick him away but to feel him squeeze a little; reassuring, familiar.

“Are the pet names going to be a thing?” Will asked. They rarely used anything but each other’s names in bed and outside of it. He didn’t know how he felt about it. He didn’t know how to feel about any of this.

“Little ones need to be reminded how loved they are,” Hannibal pointed out gently, easing Will’s head against his shoulder again until he sighed. “Will you let Daddy help you get ready for next time? Or do you want to do it on your own, like a big girl?”

“Why am I a girl?” Will mumbled, nuzzling against Hannibal’s collarbone.

Because that’s the farthest you can get from Will Graham .

Will swallowed and hummed before Hannibal could answer him, drawing a hand over his chest, catching the buttons and fiddling with them. He felt almost drugged, sitting here held close and warm, dressed how he would never otherwise dress. There was a safety in it, Will couldn’t deny it. Hannibal often made him feel safe.

“You can help if you like,” Will added finally.

“I would very much like to,” Hannibal assured him. “I don’t want you to hesitate in asking for what you need. I’m going to be happy to give you it.”

Will flushed, his face hidden against Hannibal’s throat. He didn’t want to think about any of this as something he *needed* .

But maybe he did. Maybe this was exactly what he’d been missing. Maybe this was the answer to his stress.

“The dress is nice,” he admitted sheepishly. “Comfortable.”

“I’m glad you think so,” Hannibal said. His hand rested on Will’s knee, and it was something like peace.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> *Will closed his eyes, tucking his face into Hannibal's throat. Every bit of this was worth it, even if only for the cuddles he got. Hannibal was so much gentler with him like this. Not that Will couldn't crawl into his lap for a hug any other day, but this was different. This was Hannibal treating Will as if he was delicate. Precious.*
>
> A bath, a nap, and a tantrum.

Will had run out of Aspirin. His hands were shaking and his head was rattling and he wanted nothing more than to drown his sorrows and fall face-first into bed and be buried alive by dogs.

Unfortunately, he had dinner with Hannibal. A standing dinner, not just something out of the blue that he could excuse himself from with a bullshit story. No, he had to be present, and talk, and eat, and appear human to the one man in the world who could always tell when he wasn't.

And Will hated that. Hated that he brought back work with him and it rubbed off on others, hated that Hannibal so willingly took upon himself the mantle of protector and the silent suffering partner. He didn't need to be that. Hell, Will doubted he wanted to be that, but there was little else one could be with Will Graham.

Will had warned him.

He had.

Hannibal had stayed.

So Will knocked on Hannibal's door a bit too loudly when he arrived and yanked his glasses from his face to rub his eyes. He didn't immediately look up when Hannibal opened the door to him.

"It looks like you had a difficult afternoon."

"Ha," was all Will managed, before stepping closer and allowing himself to be embraced.

Hannibal pulled him into the entryway and held him close. His arms were warm and secure. Will was still tense, but he was beginning to feel just a bit better already.

"Poor thing," Hannibal whispered in his ear. His fingers came up to rub gently at Will's nape, exactly the way Will liked. "Why don't you let Daddy draw you a bath?"

Will's shoulders hunched up around his ears. They hadn't tried it again since that first time, and Will never *had* gotten up the courage to ask Hannibal to shave his legs.

But he'd promised Hannibal he'd try it. And Hannibal seemed really into it, for some reason.

"Okay. That sounds… that sounds nice."

In the bathroom, Hannibal added *bubbles* to the tub, and then batted Will's hands away from the hem of his shirt.

"Let Daddy take care of it, sweetheart. You just relax."

Will huffed a breath, displeased, and had to resist the urge to cross his arms over his chest petulantly as Hannibal worked the buttons free from the bottom up. He gently pushed Will's shirt off his shoulders and folded it before reaching for his undershirt to pull over his head.

The last time Will had been undressed in such a non-sexual way had been in hospital when he'd gotten shot. When he and Hannibal were getting ready for bed, he either got to his own things first or Hannibal yanked them off him so fast Will had to search for them in the morning.

Will obediently stepped out of his pants when Hannibal lowered them. He stepped out of his boxers. He snorted when Hannibal tugged off his socks to ball up together and set aside. When Hannibal stood up again, Will instinctively leaned into his chest, nuzzling against his shirt.

"God I'm so fucking tired," he mumbled, biting his lip when Hannibal made a gentle sound of correction. Right. He was a 'little girl', he couldn't use language like that. It still tugged at Will's skin in an unpleasant way to think too much into this. So he hadn't. And he didn't now. Or he tried to, anyway.

"Sorry I'm pushing dinner til late," Will apologized instead, accepting Hannibal's hands in his hair as he petted it.

"Nothing to be sorry for. It's much more important to Daddy that his baby girl is feeling better. Dinner can wait."

Dinner's never waited, Will wanted to point out. But didn't.

Hannibal held Will's hands as he stepped into the tub, as if Will might fall without him there to guide him. The water was bordering on too hot, but Will sank into it with a grateful groan. It felt amazing on his aching muscles. The tub was deep enough for the water to come up to his shoulders, and everything felt ten times better already.

Then Hannibal tilted his head back and poured a cupful of water over his hair, and Will groaned again, knowing what was coming.

"You have magic hands," he whispered as Hannibal massaged shampoo into his hair. Hannibal chuckled.

“Will you still let me clean you up, sweetheart?” He asked a few minutes later.

“Huh?” Will’s eyes had drifted shut as Hannibal rinsed the shampoo out, and he was barely awake, sunk too deeply into comfort.

“Just a bit of tidying,” Hannibal explained. He draped a folded towel over the edge of the tub, lifting Will’s leg onto it.

“Oh.” Right. Shaving his legs. Will was already flushed from the heat, and he hoped it hid his sudden wave of embarrassment. “Yeah, I guess.”

Hannibal stared at him, expectant. Will nearly whimpered.

“Yes, Daddy,” he said in a hushed whisper.

Hannibal leaned close to kiss his forehead, wordless praise that eased Will into the water again, watching him curiously rather than with trepidation.

Will had never shaved his legs before. He'd never really wanted to. He'd certainly never needed to. And he'd never thought that he'd ever have someone else shave them either, so when Hannibal took up some shaving cream to rub gently over his shin, Will couldn't help but laugh.

"Sorry, tickles," he explained, pushing fingers between his teeth to keep the next giggle quiet. Hannibal had bought a specific razor for this, Will had never seen it before, and when he drew it down Will's leg he sunk down enough for the water to cover his mouth.

Hannibal paid him such attention that Will wanted to sink lower, entirely underwater to hide himself. But the look that came over Hannibal's face as he shaved Will, cleaned him, took care of him, stopped him. He wouldn't deny him that. Hell, if this was what he wanted it wasn't hard for Will to comply.

By the time Hannibal finished with Will's left leg he was almost dozing again, blinking his eyes rapidly to get himself awake as Hannibal lowered his foot back underwater.

"How are you feeling?" Hannibal asked him. Will hummed, stretching in the water as the doctor circled the tub to take Will's right leg next.

"Pretty good actually." He bit his lip. "Thank you, Daddy." He hesitated, fiddled with his hair, took a breath before adding: "how are *you* feeling?"

Hannibal looked up at him. His smile was so genuine that Will ached to see it. He felt guilty for being so reluctant to give this to Hannibal. It was such a simple thing, and he was so happy to do it.

“I’m feeling quite content,” Hannibal assured him. “I get to take care of my sweet girl tonight. I can imagine very few better ways to spend my evening.”

He returned to his task, leaving Will to mull that over in his head.

“Perhaps some bath toys, next time,” Hannibal said when he was finished. Will shrugged.

“It’s relaxing just to sit here. I don’t need anything like that.”

“Will.” Hannibal reached for a fresh towel, huge and fluffy, and released the drain. “You’re allowed to have much more than just the things you *need.”*

Will didn’t have an answer for that. He was quiet as Hannibal helped him out of the tub, wrapping him up tight and finding another towel for his hair. He didn’t resurface from his thoughts until Hannibal led him back into the bedroom and pulled a dress from the closet. A completely different dress than the last one.

Will made another of those soft sounds that passed for a laugh and shook his head.

"Another one?"

"As many as I can spoil you with," Hannibal replied, kissing his cheek. He walked around Will to the dresser and from there took a pair of socks, white and simple but with a frilled edge that made them absolutely *not* Will's socks. He also set out a pair of honest to god *panties* next to those: silky and pale beige to match this new dress.

"Hannibal -" the man cleared his throat and Will sighed. "Daddy, I have - I don't need those."

"What did we just say about needs baby?" Hannibal prompted him. "I want you to be comfortable and properly dressed. Do you need Daddy to help dress you?"

Will fidgeted with the edges of the towel, tugging it tighter around his shoulders. “I don’t- I-“

He had a moment where he considered a fib, considered doing it on his own and sneaking his boxers on underneath it.

But then he remembered Hannibal’s smile in the bathroom, over something as simple as shaving Will’s legs. Sighing, Will let the towel go. “Help me, please, Daddy.”

Hannibal was practically beaming, or the Hannibal equivalent of it. He rubbed Will down with the towel one more time, diligent enough to make Will blush. Then he knelt before him, holding out the panties first.

“Step in, sweetheart.”

Will braced himself on Hannibal’s shoulders. One foot, then the other, and then Hannibal slid the panties up over his smooth calves and thighs.

They felt nice. Better than nice. Soft and silky, clearly made for men in how comfortably they cupped him. Standing before Hannibal in nothing but the panties, Will felt unambiguously pleased with a part of this for the first time.

“The dress next, and then you can sit for Daddy to put your socks on,” Hannibal said, reaching for the cloth. This one was a pale beige color, with a white apron attached to it. It still made Will nervous as he stepped in.

It fit him as well as the first dress had. Definitely tailored. For a moment Will froze, just thinking about someone had *to make* -

"Where did you go, sweetheart?"

"I'm right here, Daddy," Will replied vaguely as Hannibal did the dress up and drew his palms down to flatten it and adjust the lay of the skirt.

"Come here to me," Hannibal told him, guiding Will to the bed and sitting down first, implication clear that Will should sit in his lap. He did, squeaking in surprise when Hannibal tugged him closer, before taking up a sock to fit over Will's foot.

"That's better," Hannibal said, wrapping his arms around Will's waist and kissing his cheek. "So dressed up for Daddy, clean and warm."

Will sighed and set his hands to Hannibal's where they held him, gently kicking his feet to see the socks appear and disappear from beneath the poof of his dress. He had to admit that he did feel better than when he'd come over. He didn't know if it was down to the bath alone or everything else.

"Feels nice," he managed after a while.

Hannibal pet gently over Will’s thigh, smoothing the fabric of the dress against his skin. Will had no idea how Hannibal managed to find such comfortable dresses, but he didn’t feel constricted or itchy like he’d expected. Even the apron was merely another part of the dress, not something to tug at him or tighten around his waist.

Will closed his eyes, tucking his face into Hannibal’s throat. Every bit of this was worth it, even if only for the cuddles he got. Hannibal was so much gentler with him like this. Not that Will couldn’t crawl into his lap for a hug any other day, but this was different. This was Hannibal treating Will as if he was delicate. Precious.

“Dinner’s getting cold,” he murmured into Hannibal’s neck.

“Soon,” Hannibal promised him. “We’ll have dinner, and then we’ll have a few stories before bed. Does that sound nice, little one?”

It *did* sound nice. Hannibal had read to him before. It helped him drift off so much easier than just laying there. “Sounds nice, Daddy.” He was so relaxed from the bath, from such gentle touching.

“It’s alright,” Hannibal whispered. “A little rest before dinner. Some time to hold my sweet girl. I should hold you more often, I think.”

Will wanted to tell him that yes, he should. Like this, any other way, but that he should. He was sure he said it, too, but maybe he didn’t, because Hannibal didn’t answer him. Will dozed, pressed up close to Hannibal, just sitting in his lap with his feet tucked up to the bed in his ridiculous - but also very, very comfortable - socks.

When he woke, it wasn't as big a shock as Will had expected it to be. He took in the dress, the socks, the feeling of not-his-briefs. He took in Hannibal, still holding him, but sitting more comfortably back against the headboard of the bed, glasses on and iPad resting against the bed by Will's feet as he scrolled it silently.

Maybe this would be okay.

Maybe it wasn't as weird as Will had worried it would be.

"Hannibal, no, I'm not in the mood for this today." Will hadn't slept well the night before. He hadn't had a good day at work. He hadn't had a good day at all, and now Hannibal was pulling another damn dress out of the closet and Will wanted to scream. "Can't we just… be us please?"

They had been them. The night before, the one before that. Hannibal actually never pushed this new kink - Will had no idea what else to call it - on Will when he felt it wasn't needed, so Will knew he was overreacting in suggestion they hadn't been adults together for a while.

But he just… the idea of being dressed up right then and coddled made him want to lash out and cry.

Hannibal laid the dress out on the bed, gently adjusting layers and lace. "We are no less us when we do this than we are any other time," he said, laying socks out beside it. "If you are asking if we can spend the night without these trappings, we can certainly do that. If you don't feel you would get any benefit from it, you are more than welcome to use your word."

Will gaped at Hannibal, as he fetched a pair of panties from a drawer that was slowly becoming entirely devoted to his 'little girl.' The panties matched the deep forest green of the dress. Hannibal hadn't been kidding about his intent to spoil Will, who had yet to wear the same thing twice. Will suspected he wanted to be prepared no matter how often they did this.

"So you're saying that unless I safeword out, you're just going to… what? Daddy me anyway?"

"Yes." Hannibal offered no further explanations or arguments. Instead, he stood expectantly in front of Will, waiting for him to drop his folded arms.

Will glowered back. He had only used his safeword a handful of times in the time they'd played together, and Hannibal knew he hated it. If they were doing something with power play, he didn't like remembering that he had an out, that Hannibal wasn't *really* in control.

"Fine," Will huffed, throwing his hands up."I guess we're playing dress up tonight."

Immediately, Hannibal's hands went for his buttons, guiding Will out of his work clothes and into his dress, smoothing out creases along the way.

"There we go," Hannibal said, "doesn't that feel better?"

"No," Will grumbled. Hannibal gave him a stern look.

“I understand that you’re unhappy about not getting your way,” he said slowly, “but I still expect polite manners from my little girl. Now, we’re going to go downstairs and have dinner, but afterwards, you can decide what you’d like to do. Would you like to color tonight, or have some stories?”

“I don’t know,” Will mumbled. “Neither.”

Hannibal regarded him a moment before humming just a single note of noise. Then he led the way downstairs without further comment, guiding Will to his usual chair and pulling it out for him to sit down.

Dinner was fairly uneventful. Even Will couldn’t fuck up dinner. He ate, he complimented Hannibal on the meal, he vindictively had a glass of wine even when Hannibal glared at him the entire time he poured and drank the thing. It was fine. Everything was fine.

He plodded after Hannibal when he went upstairs again, and sat down heavily on the floor and glared up at him when Hannibal guided him to the corner of the room they’d decided would be the play area. He didn’t want to color in. He wasn’t a child. He didn’t want *story time* , because he wasn’t a fucking toddler.

He wanted to get drunk and get fucked and sleep it off.

“You’re being very naughty today,” Hannibal pointed out gently, and the word was enough to snap Will’s eyes to the ground and bring his knees up towards himself. He set his chin against them and shrugged.

“Sorry.”

“Are you?”

“I told you I didn’t fucking want this today,” Will muttered.

“You have a word for that.”

“Yeah,” Will agreed quietly. “Fuck this.”

For a moment, Hannibal did nothing at all, then he took a step and crouched down in front of Will, catching his chin with a firm hand, but not enough to hurt.

“You know that’s not how we speak to Daddy,” he said softly, and that was somehow more embarrassing than if he’d yelled or broken character. Will swallowed. “Daddy’s little girl is always so well-mannered. But we all need reminders, don’t we?”

“No,” Will said, his mouth working faster than his mind. He knew where this was going. He’d played enough games with Hannibal to recognize the signs.

“I think we do,” Hannibal said, wrapping his hand around Will’s wrist. His hand felt so big like this, even though he wasn’t much bigger than Will. Just a little bit. Just enough to make Will *feel* small.

Will dragged his feet as Hannibal pulled him towards the bed, shaking his head.

“No thank you,” he said, using the manners Hannibal had been so insistent on. “I don’t need a reminder.”

Hannibal sat on the edge of the bed, cupping Will’s face with one hand. “Do you have something you’d like to say to me?”

Will whined, childish as it was, and scuffed his sock foot against the floor. He didn’t want to safeword. He hated it. He just… also wanted Hannibal to do exactly what he wanted him to.

“Alright, then.” Hannibal guided Will into place over his lap, and that was when Will realized another, more mortifying necessity.

“No, Ha- Daddy, wait!”

Too late. Hannibal flipped the skirt up to expose Will’s upturned backside. It was long enough that it draped over Will’s back, his hair, blocking his vision until all he could see was the dress or the carpet his hands were braced on. Hannibal gripped his panties, tugging them down just enough to trap Will’s thighs, and Will gave a squeak of embarrassment.

Spanking wasn’t new for them. That wasn’t what was making Will’s heart migrate to his throat. It was the fact that he was bent over Hannibal’s knee with a skirt pulled up over his head, and his *panties down* . It was *humiliating* .

The first strike wasn’t painful so much as surprising and Will yelped, squirming his socks against the carpet as Hannibal held him still.

“I know it doesn’t feel very nice, little one, but you were warned not to be rude to Daddy.”

“I know, I’m sorry!”

“A few more,” Hannibal told him, stroking his palm over Will’s spanked cheek. “And all will be forgiven. But you have to hold still and be good for Daddy, do you understand?”

“Yes.” Will mumbled, hiding his face further in his arms as Hannibal hit him again. He tried to keep himself quiet, tried to stay still, but he wanted to hide, to disappear, to dissolve in his humiliation and his whines came louder and louder with every strike until he was wailing, a constant unhappy sound he’d never made before.

Hannibal hushed him, soothed a hand over Will’s pink skin. “Three more, sweetheart.”

Will didn’t answer him, he bit his lip and curled his toes and the next sound he made was a sob. A goddamn *sob.* He’d never cried from a spanking before. It didn’t even *hurt* that much, it made no sense, but once they’d started the tears just wouldn’t stop. Even when Hannibal had finished the punishment and said Will’s name, even when his panties were pulled back up and his skirt returned to lay over his thighs, even when Hannibal guided Will to stand back up and embraced Will against him.

“My sweet girl,” Hannibal whispered to him, running his hand down Will’s spine, over the buttons that held the dress in place. Will cried harder, because he didn’t *feel* sweet. He didn't know *what* he felt, except, possibly, ‘everything.’

“Alright,” Hannibal said, when Will’s hiccups showed no sign of stopping, “it’s alright, sweetheart. Daddy has you.”

He lifted Will as if he weighed nothing, climbing into the bed with Will held tight to his chest. He bundled them both up in the blankets, brushing kisses over Will’s forehead and tear-stained cheeks.

“You’re safe, little one. Let it out. Cry as much as you need to.”

Will cried until his head ached, until his eyes burned. At some point, he slept, drifting in and out between sweet words of praise and softly lilting strains of a language he didn’t speak. He woke groggy and confused, tangling his hand in Hannibal’s shirt. “Daddy?” He mumbled, still firmly ensconced in the mindset the spanking had finally knocked him into.

“Hello sweetheart,” Hannibal replied, stroking through Will’s curls. He cupped Will’s cheek when he yawned and guided him to look up. “How was your nap?”

Will made a low displeased sound and stretched against Hannibal before sighing and settling still again. Slowly it came back to him why his head hurt, why his ass hurt, why he was dozing on Hannibal’s chest in a dark green dress instead of -

“‘M sorry,” he said. Hannibal hushed him gently.

“I know, little one. All is forgiven. Daddy is so proud of you for being brave enough to cry.”

“Crying isn’t brave,” Will mumbled, cheeks burning. He wanted to apologize properly, for being an actual *child* , and a brat to boot. He’d just had a shitty day, and he’d taken it out on Hannibal for no bloody reason. He turned his eyes up to Hannibal when the man stroked beneath his chin and turned him to.

“Being vulnerable, and open, and honest, is very brave. Especially in front of Daddy.” He leaned in to kiss Will’s forehead, nuzzling against him before lying back down. “My sweet, beautiful girl.”

Will’s eyelashes fluttered and he shuddered at the praise. It was still odd, still a bit uncomfortable, but he was too tired to be bothered by it. Too tired to care about anything but how good Hannibal was being to him. “M’not sweet,” he protested, because arguing with anything else in that sentence was unlikely to get him anywhere.

“You are,” Hannibal assured him. “When you’re happy, when you’re relaxed. When you know you’re safe with Daddy, then you’re my sweet girl.”

Will shrugged. Hannibal always made it sound so easy. “I like when you take care of me,” he whispered. He pressed it into Hannibal’s shoulder like a secret, but Hannibal heard it anyway.

“I’ll always take care of you,sweetheart,” he promised. “Whenever you want me to, and whenever you *need* me to, even if you think you don’t want it.”

It was a nice thought. To be loved so thoroughly, so unconditionally. Will wanted to hold on to that, to capture that feeling in his hands and grip it tight. “Love you,” he said softly.

Hannibal brushed a kiss against his temple. “I love you too, sweetheart. Are you ready to get up and color for a little while?”

Will bit his lip. “Can we just read stories tonight, Daddy?”

Hannibal reached for his tablet. “Of course we can.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

> *Hannibal didn't make any childishly inaccurate car sounds, he didn't drive the toy about, but he pushed it gently towards Will until the front wheels snagged against Will's dress and the truck stopped on its own. And suddenly Will wanted to cry, because he had no idea why it was so* hard *for him to do the same; to take the truck and wheel it back to Hannibal. He had no idea why he felt like such a failure for being unable to* play.
>
> Will learns to play, discovers the joys of playing outside, and... something else.

Chapter Notes

> There is no explicit sexual content in this chapter, but there is allusion to it while in little space.

Will had always done well with routine. He'd never had a particularly regimented childhood, quite the opposite. He'd found school an escape, until bullies found him, he found the library an escape when they did. Then the police academy, with its days scheduled to the minute. Then Quantico.

Outside of work, Will hadn't actually managed to keep to a set and comfortable routine. He'd have lovers, on and off. He'd eat well, on and off. The only thing he remembered to do religiously was to feed his dogs twice a day and let them out. When he met Hannibal, dinner once a week had become routine; because Hannibal kept him to it.

Now, at least once a week, Will let Hannibal undress him and put him in soft panties and a dress. He ate dinner and cuddled up to his Daddy, listening to he read to him. Sometimes, Will lay on the floor surrounded by crayons and pencils, blank pages as well as thickly-outlined images for him to fill with color. Sometimes, Daddy laid out toys for him.

Will was very careful with his things. He kept his dresses tidy and clean, even when he lay on the ground. He tried to walk on his toes so as not to get his pristine white socks dirty. He colored neatly. But the toys he rarely touched. The truth of the matter, and the most embarrassing thing of all, was that Will had no idea what to do with them. He was sure he'd played with things as a kid, he was sure he'd had trucks and balls and blocks. But now he had no idea what to do with the bright and new toys Daddy had set up for him.

Hannibal noticed.

When Will next asked for a story, Hannibal obliged him, welcoming Will to his lap as he always did. Only this time, he passed him one of the soft stuffed animals he'd seen Will eyeing cautiously.

"Hold him for me, sweetheart. Daddy needs both hands to keep the book open and he wanted a story too."

It was nothing much. Just a soft (so incredibly soft) stuffed bear. Hannibal really ran with the old-fashioned aesthetic. He liked to keep Will's playthings simple.

But Will hadn't held a stuffed bear in decades, and he found himself holding it between tentative fingers, as if he might break it.

They read all kinds of things. Sometimes children's stories, fairy tales, things that Will could listen to without having to think too hard. Sometimes classics, the kinds of things Hannibal claimed would 'enrich' Will's mind. Occasionally, if Will was walking the strange borderline between Special Agent Will Graham and Hannibal's little girl and wasn't quite in the mood to finish the drop, Hannibal would read him articles.

Today was a fairy tale sort of day. Hannibal liked to read him tales he'd never heard of, legends from places he'd never been. He held Will close in his lap, reading quietly, and Will held the bear in his own.

It looked cute, nestled among the navy layers that made up today's dress. Sometimes, when Will ignored his size and his shape and the fact that he refused to let Hannibal shave off his beard, he could get lost in the pretend.

He wavered between reality and pretend at the moment, Hannibal's steady voice drifting over him. It was a nice bear. All of Will's toys and things were nice. He tried not to think on how much Hannibal spent on Will's clothes alone.

It was a waste to let Hannibal buy all these things and then not use them. Hannibal *wanted* him to use them. And the bear was *so soft.* At the very least, it would make a good pillow.

That was what Will settled on, tucking the bear between his cheek and Hannibal's shoulder, burying his face in its soft fur with a sigh.

Will often reached a liminal sort of space with the play they did together, where nothing made much sense but it didn't have to. Soft things felt safe, warm things felt safe. Wearing a dress now made Will immediately want to curl up, but not in fear or shame, rather in to a comfortable coil pretending to be much smaller than he physically was.

Everything they did like this, when Will was Daddy's little girl, was *safe* .

Will hadn't considered for years that he had been missing safety in his life. He'd assumed as all jaded adults did that if he wasn't immediately in danger that he was safe. Coming home to his dogs, alive and well, warm and happy, was safe; but outside of that Will was under near-constant stress and pressure, chipping away at his mind and his body until he was fit to burst and shatter.

He had, a few times.

Nothing had ever been so effective - not even a deep fucking - in bringing him back to himself than being spanked by Daddy until he cried.

“Sweetheart?”

“Hmm?”

“What do you want to do after story time?”

Will wriggled uncomfortably. He was never sure how to direct their play, when the choice was left up to him. He liked it better when Hannibal guided him along and all he had to do was listen.

“More stories?” He suggested. It earned him a gentle pat to his thighs, reassuring, comforting.

“Daddy’s voice is getting tired,” Hannibal told him. “Why don’t we try playing with some of your toys?”

Will gave a disgruntled huff, muffling the fussy sound in the stomach of his bear. He knew what Hannibal was trying to do. He wasn’t stupid. But he wasn’t going to be any *good* at it, and it was just embarrassing.

“I think we’ll spend some time with your blocks,” Hannibal decided. “That will be nice, won’t it, sweetheart?”

The urge to be ‘naughty,’ as Hannibal called it, bubbled up in Will from time to time. He was sorely tempted to inform Hannibal that it would *not* be nice, it would be frustrating and embarrassing and going to make Will grumpy.

But he was still sore from the *last* time he’d been grumpy, and so instead he reached out to tap Hannibal’s tablet. “Stories first, please.”

Hannibal indulged him with one more story, before kissing Will’s temple and setting him to the floor from Hannibal’s lap. He gave him a gentle but deliberate push towards the play area and stood to follow.

Will took his time moving over, took his time sitting down, spent far too long arranging his skirt so he wouldn’t wrinkle it - though he’d never cared about that much before - and then stared helplessly up at Hannibal. The man lowered himself to his knees, shifting to rest most of his weight against his hip before reaching for one of the trucks that had sat out waiting for Will for weeks now.

Hannibal didn’t make any childishly inaccurate car sounds, he didn’t drive the toy about, but he pushed it gently towards Will until the front wheels snagged against Will’s dress and the truck stopped on its own. And suddenly Will wanted to cry, because he had no idea why it was so *hard* for him to do the same; to take the truck and wheel it back to Hannibal. He had no idea why he felt like such a failure for being unable to *play* .

Because he was an adult. He was a special agent of the FBI. He had a mortgage and responsibilities. He had creatures that relied on him for survival, he *couldn't just play* .

And if he *could* , the question was *could he?* Will understood the logic behind play, hell, he could give a damn lecture on it if he had to - though he hadn't had to for many years - but he couldn't apply those concepts to himself. He understood that taking a block and putting it atop another was a way to develop hand-eye coordination, a way to work on understanding balance and fundamental construction. But he couldn't bring himself to do so imperfectly.

He hadn't realized he'd made a sound until Hannibal stroked his hair, folding curls behind Will's ear, cupping his cheek, and then he blinked quickly to get rid of any onset of unwelcome tears. He wasn't going to cry over a truck for fuck sake.

"There's no wrong way to play, little one," Hannibal reminded him, as though reading his mind. He was good at that. "Would you like Daddy to leave you to play on your own?"

"No!" Will's hand shot out, gripping tight to the hem of Hannibal's Henley. The thought of being left *alone* in the circle of toys was infinitely worse.

"Alright," Hannibal said, gently plucking Will's hand from his clothing. He lifted it to his lips to brush a soft kiss across the knuckles. "I won't go anywhere. I'll be right here."

Will looked from Hannibal to the small cluster of toys. His heart was racing, as if this was a test he could somehow fail. Hesitantly, he picked up the truck and one of the blocks. Before he could second guess himself, he scrambled over to Hannibal, pushing at him rudely until he'd straightened up enough for Will to ensconce himself firmly in his lap, his back to Hannibal's chest. He'd nearly tripped over his dress doing it, but if anything, that only added to the idea of a clumsy, awkward child.

It was safer here. Hannibal's arms slid around his waist, holding him tightly. His chin settled on Will's shoulder, close enough to press kisses to his cheek, but without Will having to actually look at his face.

"You can always ask to be held," Hannibal reminded him gently. Face burning, Will stared down at the toys in his hands, at the dips and peaks of the dress, now bunched up in places.

The block was a steep slope. Will propped it on his thigh and slowly, self-consciously, rolled the truck down it. He guided the truck to follow the bumps of his dress, letting the natural valleys guide his path. It tickled a little when run over his thighs, and he allowed himself the barest breath of a laugh. *Not* a giggle.

Once he started, it wasn't so bad. There was almost something meditative about moving the little truck over his thighs, over his dress, over the block. Will realized that he was repeating the same paths, reversing over similar bumps of fabric, again and again, and that was… okay.

He didn't need to pretend to make truck sounds. He didn't need an elaborate story. He didn't need to explain every decision he made as the toy tumbled and bumped along over his legs. He didn't *owe anyone that* . Will had approached play like he approached writing an article,

or consulting on a scene. He approached it with the need to analyze, to explain, to have background and backstory, and *explanation*…

“Hold this, Daddy,” Will said, passing Hannibal both the truck and the block before leaning over to get another couple of blocks; setting up new obstacles for his truck to navigate.

It proved difficult to get the blocks to stay propped up among the folds of his skirt. Often, they tumbled before the truck made it to them. Eventually, with a huff, Will rolled himself out of Hannibal’s lap and onto his stomach on the floor.

This was much easier. He could set up arches to drive the truck under, bridges to send it over. He started connecting the blocks from end to end, giving his truck a push and seeing how far it would get before stopping or toppling off.

It was like a puzzle. Will had a thousand different ways he could set up his blocks, a thousand ways to crash the truck (which was almost as pleasing to watch as when the truck survived its journey unharmed). He didn’t have to imagine anything. He could do whatever he wanted. Even if all he wanted to do was crash things into other things.

Will interrupted his play with a loud yawn. He looked up hazily, his feet slowing from where he’d been tapping them rhythmically against the carpet. Was he tired? He couldn’t be. They’d only just had dinner and his bath. And Hannibal never made him go to bed unreasonably early, just because they’d played. Bedtime was always their signal to strip Will of his little girl things and curl up together as just Will and Hannibal, and it was too early for Hannibal to stop being his Daddy-

“It sounds like it’s time to clean up,” Hannibal said. His voice came from across the room, over by the dresser where Will’s undershirts and boxers were kept. Will frowned up at him, confused. He didn’t remember Hannibal getting up.

“It’s too early,” he said, cutting himself off with another yawn. Hannibal smiled at him, clearly pleased about *something* .

“It’s nearly midnight, Will, and you have work tomorrow.”

Will blinked rapidly, the words scrambling in his head a moment as he transitioned from Daddy’s little girl to Will Graham. It was a slow thing, like water sliding from feathers, but when he sat up he was back to being his adult self.

“Midnight, right,” he sighed, rubbing his eyes. Why was he suddenly so tired? When Hannibal stepped closer, Will accepted his help getting up. He let Hannibal unbutton the dress, pull off his socks, but hesitated when it came to the panties. He’d found he very much liked those, and even missed them outside of play.

“Can I keep these on?” He asked softly. Hannibal stroked his face, his hair, before nodding.

“Of course.”

“Thanks.”

Will pulled his own undershirt on as Hannibal hung the dress back up. When he returned to bed, Will caught his arm, wrapping his own over Hannibal's shoulders to pull him close.

"I love you," Will told him earnestly, leaning in to nuzzle their noses together before kissing Hannibal chastely. "Thank you for this."

Hannibal held Will's chin, kissed him again. "Any time," he promised. "Always."

The first time the dogs saw the dress, Will tensed like he hadn't in many months of play. The last thing he needed was for them to tear apart something worth more than his entire house in their excitement.

But they were obedient, even when their master now swished when he walked and smelled a little different. The dogs approached to sniff and nuzzle the dress but did nothing that would be considered damaging to the fabric. Will released a long-held breath and looked over his shoulder at Hannibal, who was carefully folding Will's 'adult clothes' on the dining room table.

They hadn't done this at Will's house before. It felt odd, to be dressed like this in his cluttered living room, instead of Hannibal's neat and tidy home. It felt odd to have dogs sniffing about, poking their heads under his skirt to investigate and sniffing suspiciously at the ruffles.

There was going to be dog hair on everything. Hannibal had brought an entire *kit* , an actual suitcase with Will's toys and underwear and socks. Even the blanket they'd started spreading out in the play corner to make it more distinct from the rest of the room. Everything but the dress, of course, which he'd brought in a garment bag.

It was going to need to be dry cleaned after this. Will had a good dozen, now, but the one he was wearing was his favorite, the very first Hannibal had given him, and he was terrified of sullying it.

"I'm going to let the dogs out," he called to Hannibal. They were trained well enough to stay within the boundaries of his property, and then he wouldn't have to worry so much about potential damage. "I'll be right back!"

"Just a moment, sweetheart."

Will froze while reaching for his sneakers, as well-trained as the dogs by now.

Hannibal joined him in the living room, bending over the suitcase. "Here we are. Now we don't have to worry about your nice socks getting dirty."

The shoes he held out looked like a little girl's Mary Janes, shiny and black, with just a tiny bit of lift in the heel, barely half an inch. Except, of course, that they were huge, made specifically in Will's size.

"Sit down, little one, so Daddy can put your shoes on."

Will collapsed onto the bed. “You don’t have to,” he said, even though he could not tear his wide eyes away from the beautiful shine of the shoes. “I can just wear my sneakers.”

“Those are a grown-ups sneakers,” Hannibal said, kneeling to lift one of Will’s socked feet. “My little girl deserves something nice to go with her pretty clothes.”

Will swallowed around a lump in his throat, as Hannibal carefully buckled the shoes into place. He really looked the part now, with his shoes and his thigh-high white socks. It wasn’t nearly as hard to adjust to as the dress had been, and Will wondered, not for the first time, if he should let Hannibal shave his beard during the next bath. Brush his hair. Braid a hair bow into it.

But no. This was enough. He mostly shaved his legs for comfort, anyway. No one ever actually *saw* them.

Hannibal held out his hand to help Will up. “Why don’t you go outside and play with the dogs while Daddy makes dinner?”

Will swallowed. He hadn't meant to go and play outside, not dressed like this. He'd get filthy. Even though it hadn't rained for a good few days, the dogs always brought something back on their paws and fur, and Will was always brushing something from his corduroys absently after doing so much as checking the mail.

"Go on, sweetheart," Hannibal encouraged when Will had just frozen in place. He hesitated a moment longer before walking to the door to hold it open for his pack to run past.

He followed damn near on tiptoes.

He stood on the porch a long time before braving the steps. His shoes clicked loudly on the wood and Will delighted in the sound. He *sounded* young. He let himself laugh as he made it to the grass.

He lived far enough out that he was fairly certain no one would see him dressed like this, and the dogs always made a racket if someone was coming up the drive. This was the first time Will had been outside in his dress, and… he *liked* it.

He turned on the spot, watching the skirt flare out with the movement and laughed again. It landed so softly against his socked knees that he had to do it again. He spun faster, catching himself to turn the other way. When one of the dogs came up to investigate Will bent to ruffle his fur and jogged back for the mutt to follow.

This was *easy.* So much easier than learning to play with toys had been. Will felt great, running with the dogs, throwing sticks for them to chase. He felt *pretty* and *small* and so damn happy.

Of course, the longer he was out, the more carefree he became, until soon, he wasn’t watching at all. He was too busy running to see his skirt billow out to properly watch where he was going, and eventually, his shoe caught in the remnants of an old rabbit hole.

Will went tumbling, crashing to the ground in a flurry of lace and ruffles, rolling for a moment before he could catch himself. It didn't *hurt* , but Will was back to his feet in seconds, taking in shaking breaths as he checked himself over.

His dress was okay. A little bit of dirt at the hems, but nothing that couldn't be brushed off. His shoes were a bit worse off, but he was still certain he could wipe the dust away with a damp paper towel.

His *socks,* though, his bright white, thigh-high socks with the lace edging that wrapped so prettily around his legs…

He'd hit his knees while rolling, and dug them in further when trying to get back up. The knees were covered in dirt and streaks of green from the grass.

Some of the dirt came off with frantic brushes of his hand, but not all of it. There was no budging the grass stains. They stared back at Will as though mocking him.

Hannibal would be upset. He always told Will to behave, to take care of his things. Will hadn't been careful. Not even close. And he just knew what would be coming his way when Hannibal saw this, and they were having such a good night!

But his dress was pretty long. He'd only hit his knees at all because he'd been playing with the skirts when he fell. Will hiked his skirt up around his hips, red faced as he no doubt flashed his silky panties to the whole damn forest. He yanked his socks up as high as they would go, stretching them slightly. Then, he flattened his skirt back out, covering himself from hip to calf, hiding the stains away. When it was time to take them off, it wouldn't matter if Hannibal saw them. He couldn't spank *grown-up* Will, and Will would offer to clean them or replace them himself. Grown-up Will had a wallet and a large bottle of bleach.

Will didn't have much longer to think over his admittedly bare-bones plan. He heard a whistle, and he and the dogs all turned to see Hannibal on the porch.

He was frowning, and he snapped his fingers and pointed to the spot in front of him on the porch.

That was never a good sign.

Will obediently went, slower than the dogs - because the last thing he needed was to fall over again and do *more* damage to his impeccable clothes - and found himself standing two steps down from where Hannibal was, looking up at him. He must have looked a sight: eyes bright and cheeks pink from exertion. His hair was wild too, curls everywhere, getting caught by the breeze.

"Is dinner ready?" Will asked, knowing full well this wasn't about dinner. Hannibal raised an eyebrow.

"Not quite."

“Oh,” Will chewed his lip, folding his hands behind his back as he rocked forward and back on his heel in his shoes. “Can I come inside a little early? I won’t distract you…”

“You may,” Hannibal allowed, but his arms crossed as Will took a step closer to him. “But I’d like to see your clothes, please. Wouldn’t want you tracking anything dirty into the house, now, would we?”

Will swallowed, cheeks flushed. “No, Daddy.” He obediently turned on the spot, more carefully than when he’d first tried the game out. In truth, besides a scrap of dried grass here and there the dress was in perfect condition. He made to move to the porch again and Hannibal stopped him.

“Socks too, please.”

Will bit his lip. He slid his foot forward, the hem of his skirt creeping gently up, just an inch or two, not nearly enough to expose his knees. “See?” He said, voice high, “all clean.”

This time, Hannibal let him up the steps, but stopped him before he could reach for the door. He gripped Will’s chin firmly, keeping him still.

“Do you know what happens to little girls who tell lies, little one?”

Will winced, closing his eyes. “No, Daddy.”

Hannibal reached for Will’s skirt, sliding it up to expose the grass stains. “Look what you’ve done to your nice socks.”

“I’m sorry, Daddy, it was an accident,” Will hastened to tell him. Hannibal raised an eyebrow.

“Was lying to me also an accident?”

Will squirmed, caught too firmly to look away. There was no right answer.

“I can fix filthy socks,” Hannibal said, taking Will by the arm and tugging him a few steps over. “How do I fix a filthy little girl?”

“I’m sorry,” Will tried again, yelping quietly in surprise when Hannibal didn’t take him inside but pushed him gently up against the porch railing. He tried to ignore exactly what those words did to him, how blood immediately rushed from his face to between his legs. “I was wrong, I won’t lie to Daddy again, I’m sorry,”

“Let’s hope so, little one,” Hannibal told him, guiding Will to bend over the railing and grasp the sun-warmed wood. “You are very good at learning from your mistakes when you face the consequences.”

“Not here!” Will cried out, reaching back and trying to stop Hannibal from lifting his skirt, only to get a warning swat against his thigh. “Daddy, please not here, can we do this inside?”

“No, I think here is just the place. So you remember not to lie to Daddy again.”

“Someone might see -” Will whined, struggling a little more, until Hannibal caught his chin again and made Will look at him. For a second he wasn’t Daddy, for a second the panic that built up in Will Graham was soothed by Hannibal.

“No one will see,” he promised. Then in a blink, he was Daddy again. “Now, will you take your punishment like a good girl? Or does Daddy have to put you on time out as well?”

Will squirmed, his shoes scuffing against the wooden boards. Hannibal hadn’t sent him to time out yet, but he’d threatened it more than once. It *sounded* better than a spanking, but Will knew how much being alone with his own thoughts drove him nuts.

“No, Daddy, I’ll be good.”

“Good choice, little one.” Hannibal bent him over again, until he could flip the skirt over Will’s head. He’d explained once that he thought it helped Will settle, blocking out everything but Hannibal. This was true, but it was also *mortifying* to have his bare backside exposed to the world, silky panties and shaved legs in socks with bows.

“Imagine my surprise,” Hannibal said, rubbing his hand gently over Will’s ass through the panties, “when I checked on my little girl through the window and saw her exposing herself to the world.”

Will groaned. Not only had Hannibal known from the beginning, he’d seen Will’s skirt mishap.

“Do you like showing the world your little panties? Do we need to have some lessons on how to act like a lady?”

God, Hannibal’s stern lecture voice always went right through him. Will loved it when he was strict, when he could move and command Will so easily, as if Will really was such a little thing.

“No, Daddy,” Will whispered, pressing his feet together. He could see the slightly dusty toes of his Mary Janes through the railing slats. Even covered as he was, even knowing - truly, having lived here for several years - that this was an isolated spot, he was blushing furiously, more embarrassed than he’d been during any other spanking.

When Hannibal lowered his panties, Will made a helpless little noise, trying to squeeze his thighs together harder. Hannibal hummed, gently pinching Will’s cheek.

“You know that isn’t the position Daddy expects for a spanking,” he chided quietly. Will swallowed another whimper and set his feet a little wider, enough for his panties to slide down his thighs further on their own.

Impact play was something Will loved in any mindset, but in this one, for some reason, was coming up more and more in Will’s filthier fantasies and he had no idea what to think. He’d wake from a dream where he was bent over Hannibal’s desk in nothing but lace panties as Hannibal belted him. He’d get hard in the shower imagining wearing no panties beneath his dress as Hannibal lifted it to check.

And he was getting very hard, now, as Hannibal reminded him to be a *good little girl for Daddy* before spanking him hard. The sound carried across the empty flat space near Will's home and he had to press a hand to his face to keep himself quiet.

Usually, Hannibal delivered just ten hand spanks for Will when he was little, enough to jar him out of whatever panic or stubbornness he'd worked himself up into, but outside when it was still light, where someone could *possibly* see, ten felt like a hundred.

"Daddy," Will whispered, squirming. Hannibal was generally careful with him when he was like this, but it always felt like *more* . When he was like this, just a handful of swats could bring him to tears. "Daddy, owww…"

"Be still," Hannibal chided, aiming his next swat at the backs of Will's thighs.

"But it *hurts* ." It felt like a burning heat, across Will's backside and low in his belly. Exposed, pinned, on display. Available for Hannibal's use or abuse and *oh,* if he wasn't careful he'd be dripping when Hannibal pulled his panties back up. He never let *Will* pull them up, he directed and controlled and Will loved him so fucking much.

"Good. If it didn't hurt, it wouldn't be much of a deterrent. Three more, little one, and I expect you to be still and silent for them."

Will bit down hard on his lip, gasping at the sharp sting of the next swat. He felt obscene, in his socks and his shiny new shoes. There was something unexpectedly erotic about it all, something he'd never felt in this space before.

The second bounced Will's cock against the porch railing.

The last tensed Will's balls and pulled a gasp from him. He was so hard now he *ached* , he didn't know if he could be little after this and have dinner as Daddy's little girl when all he wanted was for Hannibal to fuck him.

"That's a good girl," Hannibal murmured, stroking over Will's pink thighs, and Will squirmed.

"Hannibal?" he asked, uncertain. It was normally Hannibal who pulled Will out of the game by using his name. "I'm sorry, I - I need you right now, is that okay?"

Hannibal continued to stroke Will's skin, soothing the - admittedly not particularly harsh - heat, before reaching to pull his panties back up. "Come inside, I'll help you undress."

Thank God Hannibal's voice was as unsteady as Will felt. Will wondered for a moment if he could ever get fucked in a dress without it getting weird, but he didn't have the mental capacity right then to follow the thought through. He moved as Hannibal helped him, steadying him when he was upright again, guiding Will ahead of him into the house and ushering the dogs out the door again.

Hannibal's hands were a little quicker on the buttons than they normally would be - Will didn't need easing out of his headspace, he was already where he needed to be. He was still

very careful with the clothes, and with Will, when he helped him out of the dress, and bent to work free Will's shoes. When he sat up to remove Will's panties, Will caught his hand.

"Keep those," he breathed. "And the socks. Please."

Hannibal looked at him, up the line of his body, before leaning in to kiss Will's aching cock through the soft silk of his underwear. "On the bed, Will," he said, and Will didn't need telling twice.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

“You are a terror, did you know that?” Hannibal murmured, kissing gently at his jaw. “How am I going to discipline you if this is what it leads to?”

Discussions are had, kinks are explored.

Chapter Notes

This chapter contains sex but Will is not in little-space at the time.

Will scrambled back onto the center of the bed, staring up at Hannibal with wide eyes and parted lips. Hannibal’s eyes were dark as he stripped, devouring every inch of Will. He tossed the lube onto the bed so it would be in reach, and then crawled in between Will’s thighs, spreading them wide so he could mouth over the head of Will’s cock, straining at the panties.

The wet silk wrapped hot around Will. He whined, arching his back to urge more contact, more of Hannibal’s mouth where Will was aching and needy.

Hannibal sucked him through it, Will digging hands into his hair and holding tight.

“God, do you know what you do to me?” Will whispered. “Fuck me, Hannibal. Move me, pin me, take me, I need you.”

Hannibal yanked the panties down to Will’s knees, shoving his thighs towards his chest so his hips left the bed and his pink ass was exposed to Hannibal’s gaze.

“Oh, and if you only knew what you do to *me* , Will,” he purred, leaning in to draw his teeth over the warm skin before sitting back. “Stay there.”

He didn’t indicate for Will to use his hands or not, so cared little when Will grasped the backs of his knees to hold himself balanced as Hannibal worked his belt free. They had been playing together roughly a lot longer than they had with dresses, so Hannibal knew he needn’t hold back here. Will knew his safe word, he’d used it before, and until he used it now Hannibal would have his way with him enough to exhaust them both.

He caught Will’s ankles again and held him up, giving him an utterly filthy look before bringing the belt down hard against Will’s thighs.

“Fuck,” Will groaned. “ *Fuck* …” he curled his toes in his socks, brought one hand to his mouth to bite his knuckles as Hannibal started a merciless pace with the belt. His other snaked down between his legs to squeeze the base of his cock so he didn’t come from this alone. He hissed when Hannibal struck him particularly cruelly, and arched his back.

“Naughty thing,” Hannibal whispered, and it blurred the line between now and a few minutes ago just enough to have Will squirming, his cock twitching in his grasp.

“More,” Will begged, “Harder- oh *fuck* !”

Hannibal beat bruises into him, tossing the belt aside only when Will was deep red and whining with every strike. He dropped to the bed again, draping Will’s legs over his shoulders and grazing his teeth over one of the welts. Will cried out, his heels digging into Hannibal’s back.

Hannibal didn't give him time to think, to breathe, to work his panties down from his knees. He held Will trapped, hands hot over the welts, thumbs spreading Will wide so he could lick over him.

“Nnn…” Will lost words, he lost thoughts. He lost everything but the sweltering heat of his skin and Hannibal’s tongue sliding against and *into* him.

Hannibal tormented Will until the familiar sweet smell of his arousal filled his nose and Will’s whimpers were breathless and aching. He could bring Will over just like this and it would be a beautiful sight. Sometimes he did it deliberately, just to have Will overstimulated and sensitive by the time Hannibal took his own pleasure.

The feeling of soft socks rather than Will’s bare thighs against his cheeks sent Hannibal’s mind in to tailspin. He hadn’t lied to Will, not ever, about what their age-play was for. It was for Will to unwind, to relax, to become someone else for a change and be taken care of. But there was something sexual in it for Hannibal, too, if Will found his mind and desires turning that way.

He would never force, never coerce, but he wouldn’t say no if Will asked him, in that sweet voice he’d started to adopt for his little self, to play in a whole other capacity.

So half-dressed in pretty panties and thigh high socks with little pink bows, and begging Hannibal like only Will could…

“I’m going to eat you alive,” Hannibal promised him, and Will laughed helplessly, dropping a hand to grasp Hannibal’s hair and tug it.

“Yeah you’re good at that,” he whispered. “So fucking good at that.”

Hannibal couldn’t resist him anymore. He dragged his tongue one last time over Will’s entrance just to hear his soft gasp, and then grabbed the lube. Will hissed are the shock of cold as Hannibal pierced him with two fingers, preparing him in quick, methodical thrusts that went nowhere near his prostate.

“Come on,” Will pleased, “I need you inside of me.”

Hannibal bit back a growl. He threw both of Will’s legs over his left shoulder, bending him in half as he lined himself up.

Sometimes, Hannibal was gentle with him. Sometimes prep could last for hours, sometimes Will had ages to adjust.

Today, Hannibal lined himself up and *shoved* , took Will’s breath away in a rough, claiming thrust that punched through him. Hannibal bent him in half, lifted Will’s hips from the bed, and made him sob.

All Will could do was hold on, fingers grasping desperately at the sheets, the pillow, his own damn thighs. He couldn’t even rock back against Hannibal, could do nothing but lie there and let Hannibal draw rough cries from his throat.

And that was perfect, that was just what he needed. Eventually Will shoved his hands back against the wall that passed for his headboard and held on, head back, moans and pleas and Hannibal’s name drawing long and loud from him.

He gasped when Hannibal slapped a palm against already raw skin, caught his fingers and *squeezed* when he did it again, holding him close as Will stroked himself brutally to get closer and closer to orgasm. He came with a scream, uncaring how far his voice carried, his body going pliant in its pleasure even as his cock continued to leak pearly fluid between his fingers.

Hannibal didn’t stop just because Will had come, he slowed just long enough to yank Will’s panties off his legs and spread him wide. He bent over him, kissing Will’s chest, tugging a nipple between his teeth as Will’s hands tangled in his hair, drew harsh down his back. Will grasped Hannibal’s ass and held on, urging him deeper, faster, *harder* into him.

He was dizzy. He was sore. This was absolutely perfect.

Will wrapped his legs around Hannibal’s hips and dropped back to the bed, tugging Hannibal higher to kiss him, feeding him his sweet sounds, his aching need. “Feels so fucking good,” Will whispered, breath hitching when Hannibal struck his prostate again.

“Beautiful, overwhelming creature,” Hannibal gasped against his lips. He was hanging on by a thread, barely holding himself together as he overtook Will, brought their bodies together and made him sound so eager.

Will tightened around him, tears blossoming in the corners of his eyes, gasps pitched high, a remnant of the sweet voice Hannibal had begun to crave so badly.

Hannibal buried himself in Will, groaning into the tender skin of his throat as he let go, filling Will in deep, short rolls of his hips. Will moaned like the orgasm was his own, clinging to Hannibal, so needy, so sweet, even now.

He was a mess when Hannibal pulled away. One sock slinking down his calf, hair a mess, come splashed across his stomach and leaking from him. He was the most gorgeous thing Hannibal had ever seen.

“Will it be too much like play if I suggest a bath?” Hannibal asked. “I find I can’t stop wanting to touch you.”

Will snorted, shaking his head. He was lax and sleepy and so, so sore. He would sleep like the dead after dinner, pressed up close against Hannibal. He stretched now, when Hannibal sat back to watch, and groaned low and long as he did. Then he held up a foot, pressing it to Hannibal’s chest, and waited for him to peel his sock free.

Then he did the same with the other.

“Sorry about the socks,” he told him, sheepishly. “I honestly didn’t mean to fuck them up.”

“Socks can be replaced,” Hannibal said, kissing Will’s calf gently. “You know why I spanked you.”

Will hummed, biting his lip, and dropped his feet to the bed again, reaching out for Hannibal to help him sit up. When he did, Will leaned close and kissed him, almost chaste, compared to what they’d just done.

“Care to explain why I was so hot for it?”

Hannibal grinned, stroking his thumb over Will’s lips affectionately. “Let’s work through it.”

Will shook his head with a laugh. “A bath and psychoanalysis, just the way I love to spend my evenings.”

“Get to the bathroom you terrible boy,” Hannibal told him, and Will went. His bathroom was far from as well appointed as Hannibal’s, but there was something quite charming being crammed into a small tub together.

Will started the water as Hannibal let the dogs back in and fed them, and hummed, pleased, when he felt arms snake around his middle. He turned his head to nuzzle against Hannibal’s cheek.

“You are a terror, did you know that?” Hannibal murmured, kissing gently at his jaw. “How am I going to discipline you if this is what it leads to?”

“Not always,” Will mumbled, a pink flush gracing his cheeks. “Usually it *feels* like a punishment. I’m little, and a spanking hurts, and that’s the extent of it. I don’t know what happened today.”

Hannibal hummed. “Let’s get into the bath,” he suggested. He climbed in first, making a space between his thighs for Will to fit himself, pressed tight together in the warm water. He wrapped his arms around Will’s waist again, holding him close.

“I was having fun,” Will whispered. “I… I was *really* having fun. Maybe we could play here more often?”

“It’s easier to relax in a place you feel comfortable,” Hannibal said. “I’d be happy to relocate our play. I want you to be able to unwind.”

“Not always,” Will hastened to add. “I like being at your house too. This was just… easy.”

They were quiet for a few moments, just enjoying each other, before Hannibal spoke again, choosing his words carefully. “Sometimes, certain aspects of our play line up with things you’ve expressed sexual interest in before. Humiliation. Submission. You don’t always find them sexual when we play, but today the combination was enough to break through. I want to make sure you know that it’s okay to experience sexual arousal during these sessions. You needn’t be asexual simply because of the role you play.”

Will made a sound in his throat and shifted a little to sink deeper into the water. Hannibal’s hands were gentle as they cleaned his skin, just skin to skin for now.

“It took me ages to get used to the dresses,” Will mumbled after a while. “To being small, to letting you take care of me… I almost don’t want to taint it with sex.” He snorted, shaking his head, tilting it back up when Hannibal set a hand to his throat, gently stroking there. “Don’t get me wrong, I *love* the sex.”

“It’s not something we have to explore,” Hannibal hastened to add. “Merely a suggestion, if you find yourself seeking arousal while in that headspace.”

“I had a dream the other day,” Will told him, fingers playing in the water as Hannibal held him close. “That you had me bent over your desk in the study, wearing those panties you love most on me, the beige ones with lace. And you were whipping the shit out of me, and *God* I was leaking all over the front of them, making a mess… haven’t woken up to sticky thighs in years, Hannibal, but that did it.”

“Did you call me Daddy?” Hannibal asked, half in jest, and Will gently slapped his arm, cheeks florid.

“No.” He drew his knees up, spreading them enough to press to Hannibal’s in the water. “Yes.”

Hannibal kissed his shoulder. “We can experiment, if you like. Or not. It needn’t be a rule, either way. There’s no reason you can’t still have days where you are entirely my little girl, sweet and innocent for me.”

Will blushed, unable to duck his head thanks to the hand gently cupping his throat. It made him feel squirmy to hear it laid out like that, and he wasn’t sure if he liked it or not.

“And other days,” Hannibal whispered, lips brushing against Will’s ear, “where you can be a filthy little girl for me, don’t you think?”

Will whimpered softly. “That’s cheating,” he said. “Don’t start things when you know we’re too worn out to finish them.”

“Sometimes, cheating is acceptable. Particularly when it brings such sweet sounds to your lips.”

Will groaned and swatted at him again. “You’re ridiculous.”

Hannibal laughed and released him, letting Will relax again.

“We can try it,” Will decided. “But… not every time?”

“I won’t take your safety from you, Will,” Hannibal promised. “I’ll make sure you still have plenty of time to be mine.”

“I’m always yours,” Will sighed, smiling. For a while they just soaked in the water, Hannibal kissing softly over Will’s temple and forehead, Will dozing against him. When he opened his eyes again he was smiling, chewing his lip a moment before voicing his next admission.

“Hannibal?”

“Hmm?”

“I want to start wearing panties to work.”

For a moment, Hannibal was quiet, still against Will, and then he hummed and kissed Will’s cheek warmly. “That’s interesting.”

“I’m well aware,” Will laughed. “But the fact remains.”

“Would you like me to choose some for you?”

Will licked his lips. “Yes please.”

Hannibal squeezed him gently, kissed his cheek again. “Then I will.”

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Hannibal watched him as they continued their dinner. There were days when Will was only slightly in the headspace; enough that he could relax and ease into a quiet evening. Other days, Will fell into it headfirst and refused to climb out. Today was one of those days, it seemed. He hadn't seen Will this relaxed in a long time, not since the very first time he'd spanked Will for being a little too bratty.

This was good for him.

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes - at the end - sex that jumps between adult space and little space :)

It started to slip into more of their lives, so creeping and subtle that it went unnoticed at first.

Hannibal picked some panties from Will's collection to send home with him. Will didn't tell him that he'd started wearing them every day, that just once in a while turned out not to be enough.

It helped. The smooth silk and satin fabrics against his skin felt cool and comfortable. He'd started shaving there as well, just to feel more contact against bare skin.

When things were stressful, or headaches pounded at him, Will would slip into the bathroom and loop a finger through the fabric, reminding himself of it, of how safe he would be with Hannibal soon. How Hannibal took such good care of him.

On one such day, Hannibal was already cooking when he arrived. Will hesitated in the kitchen doorway, smiling nervously when Hannibal greeted him.

"Daddy?" Will asked softly, "Can you help me get dressed?" He had never been the one to initiate before, but he was learning that sometimes, he *needed* this, this chance to unwind, this safe space.

Hannibal looked Will over, allowed a soft smile to settle over his features. He loved Will however he could get him, and more and more he'd found that Will was allowing himself to accept this part of his life with more confidence. He stepped around the counter and set both hands to Will's cheeks before kissing his forehead.

“Of course, sweetheart. Just give Daddy one moment to make sure nothing burns.”

“Okay,” Will murmured. He slipped his bag off his shoulder, toed off his shoes, and made his way upstairs to their bedroom. They had a routine with this too, now. Will would go upstairs to wait, and Hannibal would help him choose a dress for the evening before they went down to dinner. Some nights, they would cuddle up together for a story. Other nights, Will would ask to play, and Hannibal would sit beside him, reading his own book or playing with Will if he asked.

Hannibal didn’t take long to join his little girl upstairs, kissing Will’s cheek and stroking his hair as he led him to the closet for Will to choose the dress he wanted.

“The green one,” Will told him, chewing the side of his thumb as he looked to Hannibal for approval. His Daddy pretended to consider very seriously before agreeing that the green dress was perfect for the evening.

Will let himself be undressed, blushed when Hannibal pulled down his pants to find him wearing panties already. Hannibal drew the palm of his hand over Will’s hip, over the curve of his bottom, before leaving the panties where they were. He helped Will into the dress, pulled him into his lap to pull on Will’s short socks, and then kissed Will’s jaw.

“I have a surprise for you, little one.”

Will squirmed excitedly in his lap. He was already starting to sink, already so much more relaxed than he’d been, just from being able to kick his feet and see the swish of his skirt.

“We said no more dresses until Christmas,” he reminded Hannibal, because despite their respective roles, *someone* had to be sensible about how much money they spent on little girl things, and it certainly wasn’t going to be Hannibal.

“Not a dress,” Hannibal promised, nuzzling against Will’s cheek. “Although there *is* satin involved.” He shifted Will from his lap, settling him on the edge of the bed.

“What is it?” Will asked, brows drawn together as he frowned.

Hannibal kissed his forehead, encouraging him to relax again. “Can you be a good girl and close your eyes for me?”

Will blushed, nodding “Yeah. I can be… I can do that.” He’d been working on mimicking some of Hannibal's more common phrases, but he still wasn’t quite there yet. Still, at least he could *hear* them without his brain shutting down, now. He closed his eyes tight, waiting.

After a long moment, Hannibal’s footsteps stopped in front of him again. “Alright, sweetheart, you can look.”

Will opened his eyes, breath catching in his throat.

The doll was porcelain, solid and seemingly heavier than the stuffed toys Will napped with. She had dark brown ringlets, a familiar navy dress, white stockings, and tiny black Mary Janes that shone as bright as real ones.

Will had no idea what to do with a doll. She was more beautiful than any toy he'd ever owned in his childhood. She was so incredibly fragile.

None of that was stopping the excited beat of Will's heart.

"That's my dress," Will said softly, trailing his fingers down the row of tiny buttons in the back.

"Yes, baby girl, it is," Hannibal told him. He was kneeling by Will's knees, holding the doll out for him to look at and touch. He'd expected that Will would be shy around it, he didn't take to change well as an adult, let alone when he was little. But watching Will touch so gently, his eyes truly wide in wonder… it was better than anything Hannibal ever expected.

"You can hold her, sweetheart, she's yours."

Will made a gentle noise and shook his head but reached out with both hands for Hannibal to hand the doll to him. She was heavy. Knowing Hannibal's penchant for historically accurate toys, she was probably filled with buckwheat, her delicate hands, little feet, and face porcelain and hand painted.

The dress was exactly the same as Will's favorite, the one Hannibal had first bought for him, down to the particular way one layer of lace bent funny because Will kept fiddling with it. The likeness, too, was remarkable. Will didn't see himself as feminine when he was little, but he saw himself as childish, wide-eyed, precious.

Because Hannibal did.

"Do you like her?" Hannibal asked, setting a hand to Will's foot when he kept kicking it against the bed. Will nodded helplessly.

"Yes, Daddy, I love her."

Hannibal's smile made Will's belly twist pleasantly. "I'm glad. Do you have a name for her?"

Will shook his head hard enough to make his curls bounce against his cheeks. They were getting overgrown, but Hannibal loved brushing them so much that Will was procrastinating on a haircut.

"Well, why don't we take her and some crayons to the dining room, and you can have some coloring time and think about names while Daddy cooks?"

Will nodded. Hannibal had stolen his words. He didn't know how to properly express his gratitude. The doll was the nicest thing he'd ever owned. She made him happy, but she made something ache deep inside him, too. He was already looking forward to a bath and story time, anything to have Hannibal's attention entirely on him, patching up his aches.

Will was afraid to stand with the doll in his arms. He made Hannibal carry her downstairs, setting her up on the table in front of Will's papers and crayons. Will doodled a little bit, but mostly, he stared at the doll.

She deserved a nice name. Something classic and slightly old-fashioned. Hannibal would be much better at naming her. Hannibal was better at all of this than Will was.

He was startled from his daydreaming when Hannibal touched his hair, stroking it gently and guiding Will to lean back against his stomach where he stood behind him.

“Dinner time, sweetheart. We should put the crayons away.”

“Okay, Daddy,” Will jumped up to do as he was told, gathering the crayons, his paper and useless squiggles and putting them aside on a side table Hannibal had deliberately placed for Will’s ‘little’ things. There was a pot for his coloring pencils and pens, one for his crayons, a two-tiered set of shelves to hold Will’s plain paper and his coloring pages. Will put everything away carefully before returning to the table to look at his doll again.

She watched him with clear blue eyes from where Hannibal had sat her against the centerpiece and Will looked back, just as mesmerized.

“Would you like juice or water with dinner, little one?”

“Juice please, Daddy,” Will answered absently, reaching out to touch his doll’s hair again. Hers was done in wide bouncy sausage curls that framed her face. Will wondered for the first time in his life how it would feel if his hair was curled so tight as that.

When Hannibal brought their plates to the table, Will took the doll and put her on her own chair, next to Will, to keep her out of the way but close by. He kicked his feet beneath the table as Hannibal cut up his meat for him, reminded Will to eat his vegetables. He took up his fork when Hannibal went to his own seat and smiled at him from across the table.

Will smiled back, warmth and happiness bubbling up in his chest. He felt *good.* It was a good day.

Even if he had to eat all his vegetables.

“How come you never do my hair all nice?” Will asked, halfway through an entree he could never hope to pronounce with his head fuzzy like it sometimes got.

“Do you want me to style your hair?” Hannibal asked gently.

Will shrugged, chasing another bite around his plate. “Nancy has her hair done all nice.”

Hannibal looked from Will towards the seat where the doll had been set, too small for him to see over the table. “If you want me to do your hair, I’ll be more than happy to do it.”

Will shrugged again. He wasn’t entirely sure he wanted it. It felt like another of those “too far” things. Like toys had been. There were less and less of those things every time they played. More often than not, Will was learning to greet new accessories to their play with excitement rather than trepidation. But there were still things that he clung to, things he wasn’t quite ready to change. Like shaving off his beard.

But he liked having his hair brushed. Maybe he’d like having it curled or braided, too.

“Maybe,” he finally said. “But not tonight because tonight I have to have my bath to get nice and relaxed for bedtime.”

Hannibal watched him as they continued their dinner. There were days when Will was only slightly in the headspace; enough that he could relax and ease into a quiet evening. Other days, Will fell into it headfirst and refused to climb out. Today was one of those days, it seemed. He hadn’t seen Will this relaxed in a long time, not since the very first time he’d spanked Will for being a little too bratty.

This was good for him.

Hannibal had never expected that this experiment would go this well when he’d offered Will the chance to try something new. He was so happy Will found safety in it. In *him* . He took up his wine and considered his next words carefully before speaking them aloud.

“Would you like to have a sleepover, sweetheart?” He asked, watching Will’s reactions write themselves on his face. He was such an open book when he was little, curious and willing to be understood.

Will blinked. “A sleepover?” He repeated, cheeks warming. Hannibal nodded. Will bit his lip, smile already threatening to pull too wide. “With Daddy?”

“Of course,” Hannibal said, hiding his own smile in his glass. “Daddy and his little girl, curling up for some bedtime stories. In the morning, you could help Daddy make something sweet for breakfast,” he added, watching Will’s eyes light up.

“And then we’d have more time to play together!” Excitement was overtaking Will, pitching his voice higher. On nights like this, when he’d had such a rough day and had sunk so far into his headspace, coming back up for bedtime made him nauseous. The idea of not having to, of having an entire night and then *several more hours* with his Daddy was intoxicating. Even on his more mild days, he never felt like they had enough time together, between coming home from work and going to bed. Especially on nights one of them made the drive back home instead of spending the night. “Okay,” Will said with a decisive nod, “okay, Daddy, let’s have a sleepover!”

The first step to a sleepover was bath time. Will had finally gotten some tub toys, little boats he used to carve paths through the bubbles. Mostly, he preferred to sit and soak, occasionally letting his eyes drift shut as Hannibal’s gentle hands massaged his back or scalp.

Today, he was more chatty than usual. He was normally a shy thing when small, but Hannibal had managed to accidentally wind him up for the night.

“Can I wear my purple dress to bed?” He asked while Hannibal rinsed shampoo from his hair. “It’s the softest. The green dress has too much skirt.”

“You can’t wear your nice dresses to bed, silly thing.”

Will frowned up at him, biting his lip, a hint of true worry creeping into his eyes. “Daddy,” he whispered, “I can’t wear… the *other* clothes to bed.”

Boxers and a t-shirt, in the mood he was in, would probably make him cry. Or at least make his head hurt as he tried to figure out who he wanted to be.

“Daddy will find something for you, little one, don’t fret.” Hannibal kissed his forehead.

He wrapped Will in his favorite towel, he dried his hair, he promised to comb it before they went to bed. Will let himself be coddled, accepted Daddy’s kisses to his cheeks until he laughed and tried to squirm away. Then Daddy sat him down and told Will to wait while he went to get him something.

“Another surprise?”

“Of sorts,” Hannibal replied. But Will didn’t have to close his eyes this time. What Hannibal presented him with wasn’t a dress, but it was soft, and long, and had three buttons at the collar - which was lace and soft too.

“What is it, Daddy?”

“It’s something for my little girl to sleep in,” Hannibal replied, taking Will’s towel from him, and working the nightie over his head carefully. He caught Will’s hands to guide them through the sleeves. When Will stood, the nightgown reached just past his knees and he wriggled his toes against the carpet.

“It’s soft.” Will told him, patting himself down gently. “I like it, Daddy, thank you.”

It swished around his knees like his dresses did, but the fabric was thin enough to breathe, to fold around him no matter how much he tossed and turned, and to not grow too heavy with sweat if he had a rough night.

Hannibal kissed his forehead, then his cheek, nuzzling their noses together. He settled Will back onto the bed, handing him the tablet and his doll. “Here, sweetheart. Pick some stories while I take care of your hair.”

Hannibal took his time with Will’s curls. He toweled them dry, first, then carefully combed out each strand. He acted as though Will had much more hair than he did, spending long minutes working with it even though he must have been done already. Will found it soothing, his eyes slipping closed as he sank back against Hannibal.

Hannibal spent a good half hour on that, lulling Will into a relaxed, only half-awake state. He had so many tricks to help Will sleep through the night, now, that nights without him left Will miserable and exhausted.

He laid Will out on his side of the bed, but when he reached for the doll, Will’s arms tightened around it. “You said she was mine,” he insisted, eyes narrowed suspiciously.

“She is,” Hannibal assured him, “but she will be much safer if she spends the night on the dresser.”

Will shook his head. “No thank you.”

“What if we traded her for your bear? I’m sure he’d like to hear some stories too.”

“No thank you,” Will said again, wriggling until he and the doll had both disappeared completely under the blankets, nothing but a tuft of curls poking out.

Hannibal sighed, but didn’t try to dissuade Will from keeping the doll in bed. Perhaps once he rolled onto her one time too many he wouldn’t be so averse to keeping her on the dresser. He read, and Will listened, and when Hannibal kissed him goodnight Will was already dozing.

Sometime in the night, Nancy made it to Will’s bedside table.

Sometime in the night, Will stretched out with sleepy abandon and draped himself over Hannibal’s form as he was so wont to do when dressed in boxers and a shirt.

Sometime in the night, when Will would often wake up from a jarring dream or an unwelcome memory, he didn’t.

He slept through.

In the morning, he nuzzled up against Hannibal’s chest, one leg and one arm possessively draped over him, and rocked his half-hard cock against Hannibal’s thigh. Hannibal hummed, drawing his hand up Will’s back, gathering the soft fabric of the nightie he’d slept in between his fingers. It was a curious juxtaposition, but not an unwelcome one. Hannibal turned his face into Will’s hair and nuzzled against him, just breathing him in.

Will made a soft fussy noise. He felt warm and safe, almost impossibly so. He hadn’t even opened his eyes yet, too comfortable wrapped in Hannibal’s arms.

His nightie slipped up his thighs when he shifted, bunching around his hips. His bare cock filled against Hannibal’s thigh, and everything felt too good to care that they didn’t do this, that they had *never* done this before.

Will cracked his eyes open, rubbing his cheek against Hannibal’s. “Daddy,” he whispered softly.

Hannibal felt heat warm him all the way through. He hugged Will a little tighter, encouraging the small shifts of his hips with a hand low on his back.

“My sweet girl,” Hannibal whispered, his voice low and gravelly. Will whined, an aching, desperate sound.

“Daddy,” he said again, rubbing his cock more purposefully against Hannibal. “Daddy, please, I need you.”

In a strange liminal place between awake and asleep, between little and adult, Will let pleasure drive him onward. Pressing warm to a familiar body, arching his back into a familiar hand that squeezed his thigh. He wanted to feel good, to be made to feel good, to make Hannibal feel good in turn.

He rolled a little more onto Hannibal, slipping his legs either side of Hannibal's thigh to hump against him a little faster. His eyes were still shut, lip between his teeth and curls tangled at the top of his head.

"Feels good," Will mumbled against him.

"What do you want, sweetheart?"

"Touch me?" Will asked, reaching to wrap an arm around Hannibal's neck and hold on to him. He crawled nearer, straddling the man beneath him and nuzzling his throat. He felt Hannibal's hands slide up beneath his nightgown and whimpered, arching up hard against him, helping Hannibal to bare him. "Want to feel your hands on me."

His voice was morning-rough and low, and Hannibal caught his hair to tug, pulling another warm sound from him.

"More," came that rough voice, a demanding little plea that Hannibal would be thrilled to obey.

He brought his palm sharp against Will's bared backside instead, pulling a cry from him. "Where are our nice manners?"

"Please, Daddy," Will begged, rocking hard against his growing erection. "Please touch me? And… and talk to me?"

"My sweet girl," Hannibal whispered. One hand cupped the pink cheek he'd just swatted, the other hauling Will in by the hair for another greedy kiss.

Will was frantic against him, chasing pleasure that seemed just out of reach, inching closer every time Hannibal opened his mouth.

Hannibal rolled them, startling Will enough for his eyes to open, wide baby blues locked onto Hannibal.

"Such a pretty little thing," Hannibal told him, hands coming to rest on his thighs. "Open up, sweetheart. Let Daddy make you feel good."

Will nodded quickly, drawing up his knees for Hannibal to open his legs further, sighing when Hannibal bent over him to kiss his cheek, down his jaw, over his throat. He wanted Daddy to make him feel good. He wanted Hannibal to make him feel good. They were interchangeable, one and the same, yet so entirely different in the way they handled Will.

He wanted both.

He wanted the roughness of Hannibal and the sweetness of Daddy. He wanted to arch up and give as good as he got, and he wanted to lie back and let pleasure be given to him.

He was *needy* . That much overlapped at least. He *needed* Hannibal.

“That’s my girl,” Hannibal breathed, stroking Will’s thighs, catching his fingers against his nightie to push it up further, revealing Will to the room and relishing the squirm and blush that overtook him. Will’s hands hesitated between grasping Hannibal’s hair and pressing to his mouth. He let one move down his body as the other reached back to press to the headboard, sighing out harsh when Hannibal kissed his fingertips and then past them to the soft skin of Will’s groin.

“Daddy,” Will sighed, pushing his heels into the bed as Hannibal’s breath played over his cock. “I want you to make me feel good, I want to come,”

“I will,” Hannibal promised, nosing at the base of Will’s cock, noting how groomed the hair was now. “Do you want my mouth or my hands, sweetheart?”

“Both,”

“Greedy.”

Will grinned, a laugh pouring from him that was a little too close to a giggle, but still low, still his own as well, and nodded. “Yeah.”

Hannibal licked over him, light and teasing, tracing patterns with his tongue that made Will squirm and gasp. He parted from him only long enough to slick his fingers with lubricant, and then he was back, licking a stripe up Will’s cock as his fingers begged entrance.

“Let me in, sweetheart,” he said, voice rough and thick with arousal. Will’s cock twitched against his belly, and his body welcomed Hannibal’s fingers eagerly.

“Daddy,” Will whined, “Daddy, please, *fuck* -“

Hannibal bit sharply at the inside of Will’s thigh, hiding a smile when he cried out, legs trembling.

“You know I don’t like that language from my little girl,” Hannibal warned. “Keep it up and you’ll get a spanking instead of an orgasm.”

Will groaned, hands braced against the headboard as he rolled himself down against Hannibal’s fingers. “S-sorry, Daddy. Please keep touching me.”

“That’s better,” Hannibal whispered against him, spreading Will open, working his fingers in lazy undulations and turns, slicking Will as he wrapped his lips around the head of his cock.

“Oh my God,” Will shuddered, trying to squeeze his thighs closed as pleasure came close to cresting and overtaking him. He didn’t want to come so quickly, not when he was floating in such a nice place, not when his mind was not awake enough to parse through the technicalities of this new venture.

“You’re always so sensitive when you’re sleepy,” Hannibal pointed out softly, curling his fingers and pulling a sweet mewl from Will as he arched up from the bed. “So open for me, aren’t you sweetheart?”

“Yes, Daddy,”

“Spread your legs, baby, let Daddy see,”

“‘M gonna come,”

“Good,” Hannibal almost purred against him, licking another deliberate stripe up the thick vein in Will’s cock when he obeyed and spread his legs wide again. Will bit his lip and closed his eyes, little panting whines still escaping his mouth despite his best efforts. His mind was rushing quickly through fantasies, old and new, mingling them all and confusing Will’s arousal into a storm.

He wished he had his socks on, delicate and white and up over his knees with little bows on the front and back.

He wished he had panties on, something lacy and thin. Then Hannibal could lick Will through them, could work him up until he made a mess of himself, and them.

Oh -

“Daddy -” Will’s breathing hitched, head turning to the side, teeth catching against the lace trimming of his nightie and that was enough to white out his vision, orgasm hitting him like a blow to the stomach as he whined and trembled beneath Hannibal and his expert, merciless fingers.

Hannibal worked him through it until his whines became more pained, and he was pleading, begging Daddy for mercy. Then he pulled back to stare.

Will was beautiful. Damp from exertion, slick between his thighs. His delicate nightie rucked up around his heaving chest, showing just a hint of peaked nipple. Curls in a messy halo around his head.

A sweet dichotomy, Hannibal’s handsome boyfriend and sweet little girl. Hannibal wrapped a fist around himself, stroking quickly until he groaned and spilled over Will’s quivering stomach.

He collapsed next to Will, reaching tentatively for his hand. Now was the true turning point. The moment where he saw it he had damaged Will, or jolted him out of his safe space, and they worked together to fix it. Perhaps this was only meant to be a role playing thing. Perhaps it would be best to use it as a signal to end a session. Perhaps they shouldn’t do it at all. Perhaps-

“Daddy,” Will whined, squirming. “I’m icky. I can’t help make breakfast like this!”

Hannibal’s relief manifested in a pleased huff of breath against Will’s chest. He kissed there, nuzzling gently, before bringing Will’s hand up to kiss his knuckles next.

“Of course not, sweetheart,” Hannibal told him, sitting up. “Daddy will clean you up, then we’ll go down together. Does that sound good?”

Will nodded, eyes glazed and smile warm. “Yeah,” he sighed, licking his lips. “Sounds perfect.”

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

“I don’t know why I did that,” he whispered.

“That was a lot of feelings for such a little girl to have at once.”

Will shook his head, tears welling up again. “But I’m not *a little girl, I’m not, I don’t need this, I don’t need any of it!”*

Chapter Notes

A few tantrums and some panic, but nothing major to warn for here. And no actual angst, we promise! Just... Will realizing he might need this more than he expected to.

It was so easy to fall now.

Sometimes they had sex. Sometimes they didn’t. Sometimes they teased each other but didn’t quite go so far.

Always, there was touching. Hands on waists and shoulders and cheeks. Pressed up alongside each other in bed. Will on Hannibal's lap in the play corner, which was beginning to get crowded.

“Perhaps we need a nursery,” Hannibal mused one day.

Will stiffened in his lap. “Daddy,” he said warily, “I’m not a *baby.* I’m a big- I’m big.”

“You’re my very big girl,” Hannibal assured him, rubbing their cheeks together. “A nursery doesn’t mean you have to act any younger than you are. It’s simply a term for a special room for your things. Rather than stepping on trains to reach the dresser.”

Will flushed. “I don’t have *that* many things,” he protested. “And we don’t do this often enough to have a whole room for it.” At least, he thought they didn’t. Sure, they’d done it a *lot* in the past few weeks, but they didn’t need an entire *nursery* .

Of course, Will didn’t consider the closet space his beautiful dresses took up in Hannibal’s curated and cultivated space. He didn’t consider the bath products just for his little girl that Hannibal had dedicated an entire drawer to in the bathroom. He didn’t consider the accessories and shoes for him and for Nancy.

He didn't consider it because he didn't need to. That wasn't his job.

And Hannibal hardly found it a chore. In fact, when Will wasn't able to come out to him, he found himself unable to find peace in his own house. When he was busy and Wolf Trap was just not viable to drive to, he didn't sleep well, up half the night fretting about Will and whether or not he was sleeping, what he was doing, how he was coping.

Attraction had blossomed quickly between them. Love had grown fond and warm. And Hannibal now wanted more and more to ask Will to move in together, to find a home that suited both of their needs and build a life. But it never seemed the opportune moment to ask. When Will was himself, he was exhausted. When Will was his little girl, he didn't make adult decisions like that.

"I'd move out here but the dogs," Will had shrugged once, when he'd had a good day, and when he'd wanted to talk to Hannibal as himself for an evening. "It seems like such a hassle."

But he'd been thinking about it himself. The way his chest constricted at the thought of having to leave Hannibal - or Daddy - at any given evening, the way he couldn't sleep if Hannibal wasn't there, regardless of the mindset he was in, the way he just wanted to be close, all the time.

It was getting harder and harder to come back up. The deeper and easier Will fell, the more the role clung to him, filled up his life and overtook him until he didn't want to be anyone else.

"Five more minutes, sweetheart."

Will grunted noncommittally. He and Nancy were playing a new game, where he was a medical doctor like Hannibal had once been. Hannibal had found an old stethoscope lying around, and it was Will's now. He listened for her heartbeat, her breathing. She would need surgery. Playing pretend had been hard at first, and was still hard if he vocalized anything, but he was getting better at it.

"Two minute warning."

Maybe Daddy would let him open Nancy up and see if she really *was* full of buckwheat? It would be easy for Daddy to stitch her back up. Will opened up the buttons on the back of Nancy's dress, running his fingers along the lines of her stitching, her body soft while her limbs were porcelain.

A gentle hand landed on his shoulder. "Alright, Will, it's time to come up."

"Five more minutes." He needed to pick Nancy's dress for tomorrow. Maybe they would be twins. Maybe Daddy would put a bow in Will's hair like Nancy had.

"No, Will, it's time to get up. You need to be on the road soon."

Hannibal plucked Nancy from Will's hands, setting her on top of the dresser.

The sound Will made was not one either of them had heard him make before. It was like a shriek, sharp and loud in the quiet of the house, followed by a low, long wail of displeasure.

The role made him feel safe, yes, it made him open himself up to care and coddling, to being silly and carefree, to being able to play, and nap, and relax. But it also brought forth the negative emotions that came with such openness. Will's wail ended in tears, face scrunched up and hands beating fists against his skirt on the floor.

He could feel himself, his adult self, in the back of his mind trying to tear down the walls to make this stop, but he couldn't get through. And so Will's tantrum built, until he was screaming again, and clutching his hair, and shaking his head and yowling like a wounded animal when Hannibal wrapped him in strong arms and held him close.

"Will."

"I don't want to *I don't want to!* "

"Will, listen to me."

"I don't want to go HOME!" Will yelled, trying to beat at Hannibal's arms. And while he felt little, felt weak, he was a fully grown man with combat training and his blows *landed* . "I want to stay here with you, and with Nancy and with my dresses and I don't want this *I don't want it!"*

Hannibal winced, taking every punch thrown at his arms and back and thighs, and held Will tight. He said nothing more, nothing else would penetrate this panic. But tantrums never lasted long, the human body couldn't physically sustain them for longer than a few moments, and once those passed, once Will's breathing was shuddering from him, Hannibal kissed his forehead.

"Breathe for me, Will, deep breaths."

"Hannibal -"

"Deep breaths for me, I have you. I won't let you go."

Will choked on a word and started to cry again, just as helpless as before, just as needy, but no longer little.

Hannibal rocked him, though he was certain he had Will in his arms and not his little girl. He shifted them both gently, until Will's choking, gasping sobs began to quiet, and then ease entirely. He was still trembling when Hannibal pulled back to kiss his forehead, hiccuping when Hannibal wiped tears from his cheeks.

"I don't know why I did that," he whispered.

"That was a lot of feelings for such a little girl to have at once."

Will shook his head, tears welling up again. "But I'm *not* a little girl, I'm *not,* I don't need this, I don't need any of it!"

He was working himself up again, tugging at his dress as if he might manage to yank it off over his head. Hannibal stilled his flailing, turning him to carefully undo the buttons.

“You are who you are,” Hannibal said gently, “nothing more, nothing less. Sometimes that is Will Graham, FBI agent, teacher, lover. Sometimes that is my sweetheart, my little girl. Neither is wrong.”

He helped Will stand and step out of the dress, laying it out on the bed to handle later. Will turned to him in nothing but panties and thigh high socks, throwing himself into Hannibal’s arms.

“I don’t want to go home,” he said again, a whispered admittance this time. “It’s so *hard* sometimes. I can’t sleep.”

Hannibal held him close, one hand to the back of Will’s head, the other against the small of his back, just breathing him in. “I know,” he agreed. “I know it is. I could cancel evening appointments, find ways to spend more time -”

“No,” Will sniffed, bringing a hand up to his face even as it was wrapped around Hannibal’s neck to rub his eyes. “No, don’t, it’s… it’s more than time, it’s -”

“I know.”

They stood together for a long time, Will clinging, and Hannibal holding Will just as tightly for just the same reasons. Then, wordlessly, slowly, Will pulled back to set his hands to Hannibal’s face and kiss him.

“I love you,” he told him, pressing their foreheads together. “I’m sorry about the, uh -”

“Hush.”

Will snorted, curling his lip between his teeth before releasing it with a sigh. Then he kissed Hannibal again. “I should go. Long drive.”

“Be safe.” Hannibal told him, stroking Will’s curls from his face, cupping his cheek. “I love you.”

It was always Will who chose when to drop into his safe space. Hannibal could guide him, he could help him, but he never dictated when he was Daddy and when he wasn’t.

But the day had been dragging, exhausting, and Hannibal felt so entirely and desperately sad that all he wanted was to go to Will, find his little girl for a hug. Brush chocolate curls, adjust lace aprons, debate the intricacies of dark blue or ‘dark dark blue’ crayon.

There would be no Will today. He was home with the dogs, after finally wrapping up a long, terrible case that had more often than not led to tear-filled cuddles in bed. Will’s favorite dress would need to be given some time to rest, after he’d begged for it nearly every day, rather than any of his others.

Will was everywhere. The play corner in the bedroom, yes, but also leftover pancakes in the freezer, apple juice in a pitcher in the fridge. Coloring things tucked aside on a table in the dining room. A stuffed toy abandoned on the couch in the study after a completely unexpected nap. Even Hannibal's tablet was no relief, with ads for children's stories popping up as he browsed.

Hannibal picked Nancy up from her little chair in the play corner, sighing. Her hair was beginning to tangle; he would need to very carefully comb her out again. He set her on the nightstand on Will's side of the bed, curling up with Will's pillow.

Tomorrow, perhaps, Hannibal would visit. Will would want a bath. He would want to run wild with the dogs and would probably need a change of socks afterwards. He'd look up at Hannibal on the porch, laughing and more carefree than he'd ever been before.

Tomorrow, perhaps, but tomorrow was not *today.*

Hannibal hadn't realized just how soothing being Daddy would be for *him* as well. He hadn't realized that caring for Will when he was so open, so vulnerable and beautiful in his childishness, would bring such inner peace for Hannibal that without it he felt stifled. He hadn't known that this would be just as therapeutic for him as it had turned out to be for Will.

He loved Will always, in every way he knew him. He loved the sweet little girl, the way Will learned to play, the way he fell so deeply into it sometimes that he would fuss when Hannibal gently told him to come to dinner, or to take a nap. He loved the man with the rough sense of humor and the beautiful smile, the laugh that was contagious when Hannibal pulled it from him. He loved him and he ached without him.

Hannibal considered calling Will now, just hearing his voice, listening to him complain about his coworkers as dogs padded across the hardwood floors in the background, and Will poured himself a whiskey.

He considered but he didn't. He was Will's rock, his stability, and coming across as needing support would throw Will off balance. Hannibal couldn't do that to him. He took out his phone and wrote Will his usual message, wishing him rest, telling him he loved him, then he pressed his face into Will's pillow again with a sigh.

The message jarred Will out of his reverie. He'd set up in front of the fireplace, some of the dogs around him, some of Will's books and feathers for his lures on the floor between his spread knees.

Kids could play with anything. Anything. Right? So why couldn't he? Why couldn't he turn a feather into a fish in his imagination, or a book into an airplane? Why was this so hard when he'd gotten so good at it in the last months?

With a groan of frustration, Will grabbed his phone and checked the message, pressing the phone to his lips after as he closed his eyes and hummed. He wanted to go *home* . To Hannibal, to Daddy. He wanted to go where he was safe, where he could play, and sleep, and wake up to someone who would protect and hold him.

He'd never been lonely before, when at home with his dogs, but now he was unbearably so. Parting so often was taking its toll on his psyche. Up and down and up and down, always done quickly, always with so little time to breathe in between. Will was little more often than not these days, but he still needed time between the sessions. Time to go down at his own pace. Time to come back up slowly. Just more *time* , instead of hours spent driving and five minutes spend shocking himself into one role or another.

He forced himself to be big when he wanted to be small, and forced himself to be small when he wasn't ready, all because if he didn't, when else would they find the time? Lately, Will felt like the world was spinning too fast to hold on.

But he knew what helped, even when it was hard. He crawled into bed with his phone and the dogs, tucked under the blanket in an old shirt and a pair of panties, the closest thing he had to one of his nighties. He listened to the phone ring, beaming when Hannibal answered it.

"Hello, Will."

"Hi, Daddy." He hadn't meant to say that. He'd meant to say Hannibal. But it was too late to take it back, and Hannibal was already laughing warmly.

"You're up late, sweetheart. You should be in bed."

"M'in bed!" Will protested. "I can't sleep without a story."

"You know?" Hannibal said quietly. "I don't think I can either. What kind of story would you like, little one? Daddy will find the perfect one for you."

"I just want to hear your voice," Will admitted with a sigh, settling deeper into the blankets and cocooning himself in a cave of warmth and darkness. "Can you make a story up for me, Daddy?"

"I can try,"

Will set his phone to speaker and lay it screen down so he could pretend that Hannibal was just there, just sitting far enough away not to be able to touch but *here* , not all the way in Baltimore.

"Once upon a time, there lived a little princess whose seven brothers were turned into dogs by an evil wizard." Hannibal started.

Will didn't remember the story, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that when he asked questions, Hannibal answered them, elaborating into tangents that ran like quests alongside the main storyline. What mattered was that Will was relaxing for the first time all day because he could hear Hannibal's voice.

"Good night, sweetheart," Hannibal told him softly after what felt like hours. Will hummed in reply. He slept through til morning, and woke wishing he was cuddled up to his Daddy, as well as his dogs.

“Sweetheart, Daddy wants you to listen, alright? Just for a moment.”

Will settled Nancy in his lap and obediently looked up. He sat in a whirlwind of blocks and trucks and crayon-drawn streets, beige dress spread out in uneven waves around him.

“Sometimes Daddies have to make scary adult decisions for their little ones, because that’s their job. But you trust Daddy, don’t you?”

Will swallowed, nodding slowly. “Am I in trouble?”

“No, baby girl, you’re not in trouble. Far from it.”

The conversation was making Will’s heart pound. He reached up with both hands, fingers grasping. He was much too big to be picked up and carried more than a few feet, but Hannibal could settle himself down and lift Will just enough to get him settled in his lap. Immediately, Will tucked his face into Hannibal’s neck with a relieved sigh.

“These last few weeks have been very hard on you, haven’t they, sweetheart?”

“Uh-huh,” Will mumbled. He wasn’t quite little enough to suck his thumb, but he chewed anxiously at the side of the nail.

“Well, they’ve been hard on Daddy, too. It’s not fair to either of us to have so much distance between us.”

Will’s hand fluttered at Hannibal’s shoulder, and then curled desperately into the fabric of his sweater. Was he going to tell Will he didn’t want to be his Daddy anymore? Was he going to *break up* with him?

The first would be devastating. The second would destroy Will. Especially now, sunk down into safety and emotionally vulnerable. If Hannibal was breaking up with him, Will had no idea what his response would be.

“So,” Hannibal said, rubbing Will’s back gently, “I called a realtor and last week I made an offer on a house, which the owners accepted.”

Will went stiff, his breath catching in his chest.

“There’s enough room for the dogs,” Hannibal continued, “and there are no close neighbors, we’d own several acres of land. Four bedrooms, so we have plenty of space to set up a nursery for all your things.”

Will made a helpless little noise, closing his eyes and nuzzling against Daddy’s chest. Not breaking up. Bringing them closer. Moving in together, in a house. A new house. *Their* house. To live in together, with the dogs, with Nancy and Will’s toys, as Daddy and his little girl, as Will and Hannibal.

When Hannibal gently squeezed Will’s shoulder, he realized he hadn’t yet replied, and he nodded against him, hiding his smile.

“Okay, Daddy.”

Hannibal’s sigh of relief washed over Will like a wave, like water from a warm bath, like sunshine in the early morning. For a long time they didn’t speak, either of them, and then Hannibal stroked Will’s hair and gently encouraged him to go and play again while Daddy made him a snack.

When Will was next his adult self, he wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s middle as he brewed coffee for them in the morning. He nuzzled deliberately and slowly between his shoulders before setting his chin to Hannibal’s shoulder.

“Thank you,” he said. Hannibal hummed, turning his head to rub their cheeks together.

“What for?”

“For telling me we’re doing this.”

Hannibal’s hand dropped to his stomach, searching for one of Will’s. He linked their fingers together, holding tight. “I confess, I worried you’d be upset with me for making the decision without your input. I had contingency plans.”

Will laughed, gently kissing his cheek. “I’ve been a mess lately, I’m not sure I could have made a big decision, grown up or otherwise. Besides, I trust your judgement.”

“You put such faith in me.”

Will flushed. “You take care of me,” he said softly, “in all forms. And I’m so grateful. Just let me know if I can ever do the same for you.”

Hannibal smiled. “You already do.”

Packing was an *interesting* experience. Hannibal would keep his house in Baltimore for dinner parties, and Will had not yet decided what to do with his house in Wolf Trap, but they both still had plenty to box up. Will was often more of a hindrance than a help, since Hannibal was still encouraging him to drop. Often Hannibal would send his little girl to pack something small and find Will had gotten distracted and was now surrounded by the box’s contents instead.

But eventually, they managed it, packing up a truck and heading for their new home. Will still hadn’t seen it, he’d left all the buying and inspection things up to Hannibal. As they drove, passing fewer and fewer houses until they were driving through an isolated wood, he grew more and more excited, slipping between the grown man he felt like and the childish wonder he’d become well practiced at.

“It’s in the trees?” He asked giddily.

“I told you we wouldn’t have any close neighbors.”

“God, the dogs are going to love this,” Will murmured, crossing his arms out the open window and resting his chin atop. In truth, he didn’t care what the house looked like. He didn’t care how Hannibal would want to decorate it - because neither was under the impression that Will would. He cared only that they would share it, that they would live in it together.

When the house came into view, Will couldn’t help but grin, wide and bright, the FBI agent taking a back seat as Daddy’s little girl squealed in delight.

“Daddy it looks like a dollhouse!”

It did, in a way. It was oddly shaped and had huge windows, there was a wide lawn at the front of the properly, and an enormous one out back that the dogs immediately spread out to investigate. Will stood with his hands clasped together in front of him and bounced on the balls of his feet.

“Do you like it?”

“I love it,” Will admitted, grinning, before throwing himself at Hannibal and hugging him tight. “Thank you, thank you, thank you!”

Hannibal held him close for a moment, just breathing in the scent of his shampoo, his soap. Masculine and a bit too artificial right now, but judging by the way things were going, there’d be lavender and vanilla after his bath tonight.

“Go,” he said, nudging Will towards the door. “The Master is, obviously, for the both of us, but you can pick where your lure set up goes and which room you’d like for your nursery.”

Will got a little wide eyed, again, as he had every time Hannibal attempted to coax him into discussion about the nursery. He seemed unable to accept that such a thing could exist, *should* exist, no matter how often he was little or how many toys and dresses were beginning to flood their room. Hannibal suspected he thought it too special, something he was undeserving of.

Movers had already brought the heavy furniture, but Will had been too anxious to let them touch the boxes. They did those themselves. The lure table wound up in the den, and when prompted further, Will picked the room with the wide windows overlooking the backyard for his nursery. They managed to get all the boxes into the house and even unpacked the sheets and a handful of outfits for each of them, before both desperately needed a break.

Hannibal spread out in bed reading in Italian, the quickest way to get Will to sleep. Will had tucked himself tight along his side, thumb tracing his lips so he could gnaw at the cuticle, eyes half shut.

“Daddy,” he mumbled, not quite lost to his nap yet.

“Yes, sweetheart?”

“I love you.”

Hannibal leaned over to place a kiss to the top of his head. “I love you too.”

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

> *Will swung his foot too hard and lost his balance, tumbling from the counter, hands flailing to catch himself. He landed in a heap on the bathroom floor, uninjured but wide eyed. One of his hands had been tangled in the fabric when he fell, and the ripping noise had been so horrific that he was afraid to sit up. A tiny navy button was only a few feet away.*

Chapter Notes

> A little bit of angst, a lot of cuddles.

It was a rare day that Will beat Hannibal home, but they happened. It was especially disappointing when Will had wanted to come home and relax, but he couldn't get too disgruntled about it. He was an adult. He could take care of himself. He didn't *need* to be small, it was just a fun thing they did sometimes. Often. Nearly all the time. Whatever.

Will let the dogs out. He stood in the doorway, leaning heavily against the door frame and nursing a glass of whiskey. Trying to nurse a glass of whiskey. It tasted stronger today, and not in a good way. Bitter and unpleasant. Not what he was craving. He didn't know what he was craving.

Yes he did.

Coming home soon? He texted Hannibal.

Leaving shortly. Which still meant nearly an hour until he was home. Will choked down the last of the whiskey, not wanting to waste it, and called the dogs back in.

"Fuck it," he mumbled. "I can take care of myself."

The routine was simple: Daddy undressed Will, took away his adult clothes, gave him lovely soft things to wear, combed his hair, and told his little girl to go play. Will could do that.

He went into the nursery - he still absolutely hated that they called it that, but Hannibal insisted - and took his favourite dress from the closet. The first one Hannibal had ever given him. For some reason, that one always brought him the most comfort. It was the simplest,

too, of all the beautiful things Hannibal had given him, and Will found it easier to play in it - especially outside - than in some others.

Back to their bedroom he went, laying the dress out on the bed. With a curse he went back to the nursery to fetch socks and a new pair of panties before returning.

Undressing himself was simple, he did it every day. He folded his clothes loosely and tossed them to the chest at the foot of their bed, socks and underwear into the hamper in the bathroom. New panties on. Socks on. Then he stepped into the dress and wriggled into it, already feeling a lot calmer about the entire process than he had before. All he had to do was do the damn buttons up and he could sprawl out on the floor with Nancy and play til Daddy got home.

The buttons proved difficult. Will had long suspected that Hannibal purposefully bought clothes Will couldn't get into on his own, so he could be made to feel smaller when Hannibal dressed him. Never had that seemed more true than right now, in a dress with over a dozen tiny buttons up the spine.

His hands couldn't seem to grip things properly. If he twisted painfully, he could just barely reach the bottom buttons. He managed two before he realized he'd missed a hole and had to undo them again.

It was too perfectly fitted for Will to slide it on backwards, button it, and then turn. Will dragged himself into the bathroom, climbing up onto the bathroom counter, feet already swinging like he was small and safe and not frustrated with a headache. The mirror was less help than it should have been, with everything backwards, though he managed three this time.

Will huffed loudly. Hannibal made it seem so easy! It was fitted, but not *tight,* it shouldn't have been a problem!

Will reached back over his shoulder. He could do the top few and worry about the middle later. Fumbling, he stretched the sides together. One… two…

Will swung his foot too hard and lost his balance, tumbling from the counter, hands flailing to catch himself. He landed in a heap on the bathroom floor, uninjured but wide eyed. One of his hands had been tangled in the fabric when he fell, and the ripping noise had been so horrific that he was afraid to sit up. A tiny navy button was only a few feet away.

Eventually, he forced himself to his knees, reaching back to feel for the buttons. "No," he said, frantically tugging himself out of the dress. "No, no, no!"

It was bad. The top two buttons had popped off entirely. Will had jerked when he'd fallen, and the stitching had ripped, leaving a long, terrible gash between two folds of fabric.

He'd ruined it. His favorite dress, his *first* dress, and he'd ruined it completely. Will clutched the dress to his chest, shivering on the bathroom floor as he began to hiccup. He curled himself on the bathmat, knees drawn up and dress cradled against him when a wail broke

free. Dress or no dress, Will wasn't the FBI profiler anymore. He was small and helpless and shivering on the bathroom floor because he'd done something bad.

For the first time in his life he'd been *bad* and Daddy would be so angry, he would be so upset that Will ripped his dress.

He didn't know how long he sat there, rocking back and forth and crying into the fabric clutched in his hands. His tears darkened the navy to black and he cried harder because he was making a *mess* now. A thought came over him to hide the dress, and the torn button, and hope Daddy wouldn't notice, but it was Will's *favourite dress* , one he always asked Daddy if he could wear, of course he'd notice it wasn't in the closet anymore.

When Will heard the dogs barking at the door his eyes shot up. Daddy was home, and he would see, and he would be so mad -

Hannibal took his time greeting the animals that crowded him, offering his palms for all of them to sniff and lick and nuzzle against before shouldering off his coat and hanging it up. He called for Will as he took the stairs, in case he was downstairs in the den, or somewhere other than their bedroom, and got no answer.

What he did get was an armful of practically bare Will sobbing against his chest when he made it to the landing.

"I'm sorry, Daddy, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to, I didn't mean -"

"Shh…" Hannibal gathered Will up in his arms, swaying him gently back and forth. It was unusual for Will to drop without him, and Hannibal was unprepared for such distress. "It's alright, sweetheart. Deep breaths."

"But I-"

"Deep breaths," Hannibal repeated. He drew his hand gently up and down Will's spine, until Will finally began to draw in slow, watery breaths. "There we go. Try again, little one. What brought on all this?"

Will sniffed, hiding his damp face against Hannibal's shoulder. He felt unpleasantly warm, and Hannibal had a sinking suspicion it wasn't from crying.

"I ruined it," Will mumbled.

"What did you ruin?" Given Will's attire, Hannibal had a decent guess, but it was better to let Will tell him at his own pace.

Will pulled himself out of Hannibal's grasp. He was covered in goosebumps, though the house was warm, and he shivered in his panties and socks as he led Hannibal to the master bath.

Will's favorite dress had been left in a heap on the bathroom floor. Hannibal knelt to inspect the damage, and sighed with relief. It looked worse than it was, and would be easy to fix. Of

course, Hannibal would have bought a new one in a heartbeat, but a favored comfort object was difficult to replace.

“Come here, sweet girl.” Will tiptoed over timidly, whimpering when Hannibal began to strip him out of his socks.

“Am I getting a spanking, Daddy?”

“No, sweetheart. You’re getting a bubble bath.”

“But I -”

Hannibal held Will’s face gently in his hands, thumbs stroking over his flushed cheeks. “A bubble bath,” he repeated. “And then a nice soft nightie for storytime.”

“I’m sorry about the dress, Daddy,” Will whispered. “I didn’t mean - I just wanted to surprise you and put it on, and -”

“It’s alright, little one,” Hannibal told him, kissing his forehead. Definitely warmer than it should be. Perhaps Will had finally worked himself to a fever; he’d been pulling longer shifts of late and Hannibal had been worried something like this would happen. Of course, neither adult Will nor little Will listened when Hannibal told him he needed to take care of himself.

He started the bath and let Will choose which bubbles to use. He chose the jasmine soap, wriggled out of his panties when Hannibal directed him to, and climbed into the tub when the water was almost halfway up, curling his arms around his knees as he watched the water and bubbles rise around him.

Hannibal gently washed Will’s body, guided him to lie back so he could wash his hair, all the while telling him how much he’d missed him, what a beautiful girl Hannibal had come home to. Will was dozing by the time Hannibal finished with his curls; he always calmed down when Hannibal played with his hair. When Hannibal guided him to get out again, Will nearly slipped, and Hannibal held him tighter as he dried him off.

“You’re burning up, sweetheart,” Hannibal told him softly, kissing his cheek. “Do you feel unwell?”

“Nooo…” Will whined sleepily. He clung to Hannibal, forcing him to half carry Will into their bedroom. “M’awake. Had a plan. Gonna play with Nancy until dinner and then-“ he yawned, interrupting himself.

Hannibal settled him onto the edge of the bed. “Arms up,” he said, tugging the nightie down over Will’s head. “Why don’t you settle in for a nap instead, hmm? I’ll wake you up when it’s dinner time.”

A nap sounded fantastic, actually, but Will had been so devastated without Hannibal that he was reluctant to let him out of his sight now. “Nooo…” he whined again, reaching for Hannibal even as he was gently pressed back into the bed.

“Here we go, sweetheart.” Hannibal pulled Nancy from the top of the dresser and settled her into Will’s arms. He very rarely demanded to sleep with her, preferring the soft comfort of his stuffed toys, but she was the quickest way to comfort him when he was upset.

Will clutched Nancy to his chest, sniffling miserably when Hannibal kissed his forehead, frowning.

“Rest,” Hannibal insisted. “We’ll see how you’re feeling when dinner is done."

And then he left. He left Will *alone* , and Will’s sniffling soon turned to silent tears.

When Hannibal came up to check on him, Will was fitfully dozing, dreams tugging his limbs tense then loose again over and over. His cheeks were still wet, his forehead had beads of sweat out towards his temples. Hannibal hummed, before gently waking Will with a cool palm against his face.

“Wake up, sweetheart,” he said, catching Will’s eye when he immediately sought for him. “You’ve got a fever, little one, Daddy needs to give you something for that.”

“‘M not sick,” Will sniffed. “I’m not, I’m sorry, don’t leave again, let me sit and watch you cook but don’t leave me alone okay? Please -”

“Alright,” Hannibal soothed him. “Alright,” he helped Will sit up on the edge of the bed. He was shaking, though he was burning up. Hannibal supposed it was for the best that he was already in his safe space; Will hated being reminded of his own mortality when he was an adult. He took one of the soft blankets from the bed in the nursery and wrapped Will in it, rubbing his shoulders gently when he stood up and leaned against Hannibal miserably.

“Do you need me to carry you?” Hannibal asked, and for a moment he was addressing Will, not his little girl.

Will hesitated. They didn’t really do that. He was too big. Hannibal would hoist him to move him a few feet, or tug Will into his lap, but he couldn’t just carry Will around.

But as Will stood, a wave of dizzying nausea overtook him. He whimpered and nodded, burying his face in Hannibal’s shoulder.

“Alright, sweetheart, hold tight.”

Hannibal caught Will under his thighs, hauling him up with a small huff. Will clung to his blanket with one hand and his Daddy with the other, too miserable to enjoy the moment while it lasted. The room seemed to sway as Hannibal carried him, and it didn’t stop until Will was tucked carefully into the kitchen armchair they’d brought from Hannibal’s house.

“Don’t move,” Hannibal said firmly. “Stay right here with Nancy until I come for you.”

Will frowned hazily up at him. He didn’t know where Daddy thought he was going to go, when he could just stay here in the comfy blanket. The stupid nursery had all the best blankets.

Will was out again before dinner was finished, moaning softly in his sleep.

When he woke, Hannibal was stroking his face again, and holding out a glass of water for him to take. Will opened his mouth obediently when Hannibal told him to and accepted the two pills he put on his tongue. He swallowed. Fussed when it went down, handed the glass back to Hannibal.

“You need to eat something,” Hannibal told him gently. “Even a little. I won’t make you eat all of it, alright? Just something to line your stomach.”

“No.”

“Come on, sweetheart, do it for Daddy.”

Will’s lips twisted together before he nodded slowly. He’d do anything for Daddy. Even eat when his stomach was roiling like a boat in a storm. He accepted a few vegetables, in stir fry sauce, still crunchy and delicious, then curled up again. He could see Hannibal from where he sat, as he ate at the counter. He didn’t want Hannibal to leave his sight.

When it came to having to go back upstairs, Will shook his head, for a moment panicking that they wouldn’t make it.

“We can nap on the couch?” He suggested quietly, biting his lip until Hannibal sighed and nodded.

Will knew it wasn’t the most comfortable position for Hannibal, but he couldn’t bring himself to feel guilty as he sprawled out on top of Hannibal, his ear to Hannibal's chest. This was his favorite way to nap, snug between Hannibal’s thighs, a warm hand rubbing his back, Hannibal’s soft voice reading him stories. Between that and the medicine, Will drifted off relatively easily.

He was out like a light long enough for Hannibal to get a crick in his neck, to grow bored with his tablet and tired from his long day. He was debating the merits of moving upstairs versus the consequences of a cranky, exhausted little girl, when Will began to rouse on his own.

“Hannibal?” He mumbled. Hannibal brought a hand up to the nape of his neck, rubbing his scalp gently.

“Right here,” Hannibal assured him.

Will blinked, going slightly cross eyed as he tried to focus on Hannibal. He groaned, closing his eyes again. “Feels like I got hit by a fucking bus.”

“My guess is you’ve stressed yourself enough to lower your immune system, and caught a seasonal bug.”

“Nope,” Will moaned. “I think it was a bus.”

Hannibal snorted softly and spread his fingers through Will's hair. "We should go up to bed. You need to sleep as much as you can while you recover."

Will shook his head with a frown. "No, I'm fine, I'm just -"

He froze, one moment sleepy and exhausted, the next almost green with how pale he'd gotten. Hannibal reacted before Will could, pushing them both up and guiding Will ahead of him in a shuffling half-jog until they reached the sink into which Will was immediately, violently ill.

Hannibal stroked his hair from his face and ran his knuckles up and down Will's spine as he groaned and collapsed against the counter. "Oh, God, I'm sorry."

"Just breathe, Will," Hannibal told him, reaching to take up the glass he'd given Will a few hours earlier to fill it from the tap again. He settled him back against the counter and made sure Will could hold the glass on his own before he started to clean up. He'd deep-clean the sink when Will was sleeping, but until then this would do. There had been nothing in the sink anyway. When he looked at Will again he was swaying slightly.

"Upstairs," Will said after a moment, sniffing gently. "Upstairs is a good idea."

Hannibal led Will a few trembling steps before making his decision. He hefted Will up into his arms again, hushing the protesting little grumble.

"No," Will murmured as he was carried up the stairs. "No, Hannibal, I'm big, I swear."

"You're dead on your feet," Hannibal corrected. "If you'd like to be adult Will, you can, as soon as you're safely in bed."

Will nodded reluctantly against his shoulder. Hannibal deposited him in the bed, straightening the nightie pointedly. "Or," he said, "you can be my little girl and let Daddy take care of you until you feel better."

"You shouldn't have to deal with it," Will protested, though he didn't argue when Hannibal pulled the blankets up around his shoulders.

"I would be dealing with it anyway," Hannibal said. "I would no sooner leave my Will to handle this on his own than I would my little one. Whoever you need to be, I'll take care of it."

"I love you," Will told him, reaching to take his hand. Not to cling, just to squeeze. "You don't deserve me being a mess all the time."

"I love you," Hannibal replied, "and you're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

Hannibal stayed sitting on the edge of the bed until Will dozed. Then he went downstairs to clean up the sink and counters. This turned into an unplanned deep clean of the entire kitchen, Hannibal using his own stress and worry into scrubbing the inside of his oven at one in the morning. By the time he came back upstairs he felt like a bus had hit him as well.

He undressed, took more medication from the bathroom cabinet for Will for the morning, and climbed into bed with him. Even in sleep, Will shifted to press closer. His fever seemed to have broken, and he sighed warm against Hannibal's chest with a little sound before falling back to dreamless sleep again.

In the morning, Will woke first. He nuzzled lazily against his Daddy's chest and curled his hand against him, just breathing him in. He could tell that Hannibal hadn't yet woken because his pulse was so steady. It was always slow, even when it should have been hammering, but when he slept it was steady as a metronome.

Will tapped his fingertips over Hannibal's collarbone in time with it.

Tap. Tap. Tap. A warm hand came up to cover his own. Hannibal peered at him through lidded eyes.

"What are you up to?" He asked, his voice low and rumbly like it always was in the mornings.

"Heartbeats," Will explained. Hannibal nodded as if he'd said something incredibly wise. He pressed a hand against Will's forehead, humming softly.

"Still warm, but not so much as last night. How are you feeling?"

"Fuzzy," Will admitted. "Nauseous. Small?" The last part was a question, Will's voice ticking up nervously. Hannibal only nodded, pulling him close enough to kiss his brow.

"I think it's a very good day to be my little one," he said. "To relax and let Daddy take care of everything."

Will blushed, squirming. "I don't have to…"

"I want you to."

Rarely was it framed that way. As something *Hannibal* wanted, no, *needed* , just as much as Will did. Sometimes Will forgot that everything had been Hannibal's idea to begin with.

"Okay, Daddy," he whispered softly.

"Good girl," Hannibal told him, kissing his hair gently. When Will slipped into dozing again, Hannibal climbed out of bed.

First thing's first: he was calling Jack Crawford to let him know Will wasn't coming into the office.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

“They say a storm’s coming through, tomorrow we might have more snow than we’ve had here in years.”

“Good,” Will sighed against him. “Snow us in, keep the world away. I don’t want to be anywhere but here.”

It's Christmas in Everything Nice verse! And as a gift, we have TheSeaVoices' *stunning* art for this story at the bottom for you!

Chapter Notes

There is sex in this chapter, but not in little-space <3

For once in his life, Will had plans for Christmas.

He was still kind of shocked. They’d decorated for the holiday, strings of lights lining the bannisters, a huge tree in the living area. Will had enjoyed himself, as an adult, helping Hannibal make batches of eggnog with a kick to them. As a little girl, he’d gotten a bit out of hand with the tinsel.

He was actually looking forward to a holiday. He was ready. He’d bought gifts for Hannibal that he wasn’t completely embarrassed by. Living together had given him a better idea of the wine Hannibal liked, the operas he preferred, the hobbies he enjoyed.

So, two bottles of wine and season tickets to the opera Will would accompany him to. Perfectly planned.

Christmas came with snow, for the first time in recent memory. Will came home on Christmas Eve to a warm fire already blazing.

The dogs were inside already, though he could see their tracks out in the back yard where they had been let loose less than an hour before. He unwound his scarf, hung it over his coat, and toed his shoes off on the mat for the snow to melt off and settle *there* rather than on their pristine floor.

Hannibal was in the kitchen, unsurprisingly, but Will let himself take his time to look at him. It was rare they had the space to enjoy each other in such quiet spaces; work or stress or both at once often made their interactions brief, though far from meaningless. It had just been a long time since Will had been able to just look at Hannibal, watch the way his hands moved as he reached to pluck fresh herbs from the wall, tearing the leaves apart and sprinkling them over whatever he had cooking.

After what felt like an eternity, with neither interrupting yet both entirely aware of each other, Will stepped into the kitchen and wrapped his arms around Hannibal's middle.

"Hi,"

"Hello, Will." Hannibal leaned back against him, welcomed the kiss to his cheek with a hum of pleasure. "They say a storm's coming through, tomorrow we might have more snow than we've had here in years."

"Good," Will sighed against him. "Snow us in, keep the world away. I don't want to be anywhere but here."

"A quiet morning in sounds lovely." Hannibal pulled the pan from the stove, setting it aside and turning to hold Will close. Will sighed happily, nuzzling their noses together.

"You know, last year, I think I spent Christmas blackout drunk on my living room floor," Will said with a laugh.

Hannibal hummed disapprovingly. "I believe I held a dinner party."

"A dozen people you secretly sort of hate? Sounds thrilling."

"Two dozen, and I made everything by hand."

"Of course you did." Will laughed, cupping Hannibal's face in his hands and kissing his lips gently. "Do you want your Christmas presents now or tomorrow? I have one that might go well with dinner."

Hannibal made a considering noise and blinked languidly at Will. "I suppose we could go with the tradition of opening gifts the night before Christmas."

"It's not like we're in it for the spirit of the season," Will snorted, letting Hannibal go and pressing his palm to his chest for a moment. "Don't go anywhere."

Will had hidden the gifts in the den, not for fear that Hannibal would go prowling to look for them, but because he had no idea where else to put them. He could hardly keep them in the nursery; he could barely enter the room when he was little, he kept the door to it shut when he wasn't. He took up the bottles of wine, pocketed the tickets, and returned upstairs.

He held both bottles up for Hannibal's scrutiny and felt his chest fill with warmth when Hannibal's eyes softened. He took his time selecting one for dinner, and kissed Will before he could leave to deposit the other in the cellar.

“I’m afraid yours might need to wait til after dinner,” he said. Will grinned.

“Good. This wasn’t all of your presents either.”

“You spoil me,” Hannibal said, setting their meals at the table. He poured the wine for them, toasting the season. Will couldn’t help the broad smile as he ate, unable to take his eyes off Hannibal.

He was really lucky. Really, *horribly* lucky. It seemed unlikely that Will would ever find something so stable, and yet here they were.

“I love you, you know that, right?”

Hannibal glanced at him, a small smile tugging at the corner of his lips. He reached for Will’s hand, taking it gently. “And I, you.”

Will fished the tickets from his pocket, sliding them across the table. “This should prove just how much.”

Hannibal took up the tickets, a laugh silently puffing from his nose as he looked over them at Will. “Are you bribing me for something, Will?”

Will laughed. “No. Helping you invest in my cultural education.”

“They’re season tickets.”

“I’ve a lot to learn,” Will grinned. When Hannibal took his hand to kiss his knuckles he blushed, still unable to accept such blatant, overt shows of affection despite how long they had been together now. The rest of dinner was uneventful. They ate and talked, finished half the bottle of wine between them before Hannibal brought out dessert.

Outside, the porchlight illuminated the slowly falling snow in their back yard. The dogs were dozing by the fireplace, occasionally stretching and yawning or kicking in their sleep. Knowing Hannibal, they would get a very special breakfast in the morning. By the time Hannibal stood to do the dishes Will was doing his best to leave them til morning.

“Let’s just relax, do nothing, all night.” he suggested, giving Hannibal his best wide-eyed fawn look until the other made a sound in his throat and acquiesced.

“You’re a terrible influence.”

“You love me.”

“I do,” Hannibal agreed, cupping Will’s chin. “Sit. I’ll join you presently.”

“Don’t you dare do the dishes,” Will laughed. Hannibal just narrowed his eyes, amused.

“I won’t. Sit.”

Will sat, leaning back on the couch with a pleased sigh. It had been a good night. He felt warm and full and content in a way he hadn't felt in years. The peace he had found in their play had stretched over to his everyday life. Hannibal had pieced him back together, bit by bit.

"Here." Hannibal set a heavy package on Will's lap. He opened it curiously, grinning at what he saw.

The new fishing line was a treat, but he was more concerned with what was under it, a box of trinkets Hannibal had collected for his lures. Will traced his fingers over delicate feathers, both craft and animal, little beads and odds and ends to weave in with them. He looked up, eyes bright.

"You spoil me," he said, mimicking Hannibal with a laugh. Wrapping his fingers in Hannibal's tie, he dragged him down for a kiss.

"Only as much as you deserve to be spoiled," Hannibal said when he was freed.

The gifts were set aside. More wine was poured. They settled in front of the fire just talking; quiet words and lazy topics. Will finished his wine first. Hannibal rested back against the arm of the couch, languid and lazy, wine-warmed and relaxed. Will drew his feet up to tuck beneath Hannibal's thigh, he nuzzled the back of the couch as he spoke, fighting sleepiness, wanting to spend as much time with Hannibal this way as possible. Both had time off from their respective jobs for ten days, but either could be called in early at any time; criminals never slept and the human mind was a cavernous thing.

It was nearing eleven, the fire burned down to red-hot coals, when Will shifted to climb into Hannibal's lap, straddling him. Will kissed him without preamble, holding his face with both hands, smiling into the kiss as Hannibal's hands sought over Will's back, down to his hips, spreading warm over his thighs.

"I think it's time we went to bed," Will murmured, grinning when Hannibal narrowed his eyes at him.

"Is it? I'm rather comfortable here."

"Here, there, you're still going to make love to me before we sleep, no escape."

"What an ultimatum," Hannibal licked his lips, squeezing Will where he held him. "I suppose we should start here."

"You're picking up our clothes in the morning," Will warned, fingers picking at the knot of Hannibal's tie.

"A fair trade."

They undressed each other with slow, gentle hands. Will trailed kisses down Hannibal's chest, squirming down between his thighs to work him to full hardness with his mouth. Hannibal groaned, tangling his fingers in Will's hair.

Will didn't get to do this often enough. He loved pleasuring Hannibal like this, hearing his breath quicken, feeling his pulse racing under his skin. Hannibal took him apart so often, it was rare to get to return the favor.

"Will," Hannibal murmured. Will pulled back, smiling fondly.

"Just enjoy it for a little."

So he did. Who was Hannibal to deny Will anything? And seeing Will this way, eyes closed, cheeks warmed with wine and pleasure as he took Hannibal deep for a moment, pulled back, and did it again. Over and over. Until Hannibal was panting voiced breaths into the room, one hand in Will's hair the other clutching the back of the couch to ground himself.

"Will," different tone this time, more desperate, thinner, higher. Will was tempted to not let up, to take Hannibal entirely over, to taste him and lick him clean, then kiss his way up Hannibal's chest to his mouth.

He was tempted.

But he also *lived* for making love to the man, and it had been a long time since they'd had the time to do it.

So Will relented, pulling back with a moan, tugging his bottom lip between his teeth as he sat up to kiss Hannibal's sternum. Both hands were in Will's hair now, caressing, stroking, soothing as Will climbed back into his lap and kissed Hannibal properly.

"I could do that forever," Will admitted, nose wrinkling as he smiled and Hannibal kissed him chastely on the cheek.

"You are exceptionally good at it."

"I know." Will brought his fingers to Hannibal's lips, keeping their eyes locked as Hannibal sucked them into his mouth, tongued between them, over the fingertips, until Will shivered.

Will stretched himself hastily with his damp fingers, growing more and more desperate and impatient as he did. He was practically growling when he snagged actual lube from one of their stashes, too impatient to do much more than make a mess.

He straddled Hannibal's hips, bracing himself on Hannibal's stomach as he sunk down, little gasps leaving him with every breath.

"Will…"

"I know."

It wasn't rough, or wild, but it wasn't slow and gentle, either. Will rode him with single minded determination, Hannibal's hands tight on his waist.

When it was over, they sank into each other, too exhausted to move, to do anything but share each other's warmth.

“You undo me,” Hannibal murmured.

Will smiled and kissed him.

When Will woke it was still very early; beyond the windows it was still dark, and he could see the shadows shifting in a way that suggested that snow was still falling outside. Everything was silent, safe, wonderful. Beside him, Hannibal slept on, turned on his side with his face nuzzled into a pillow. He always looked younger when he slept.

Will considered getting up and getting something to drink, he considered just going downstairs and reading, so he didn’t wake Hannibal by turning on the light. But he was warm, and comfortable, and figured that he’d doze off eventually. So he snuggled up closer to Hannibal and just watched him, timed his breathing to Hannibal’s own, let his eyes close and the image behind them wake up instead. He imagined slow kisses and seeking hands, imagined whispered words and quiet laughter, as though they would wake someone in their own home. He imagined more, he was sure he did, but he didn’t remember more. He just remembered it felt nice.

When Will woke next, he was giddy. It was light beyond the curtains now, and while Hannibal was still sleeping he had turned to his other side now. Will bit his lip and wriggled in the sheets and had the overwhelming urge to toss his blankets aside and bounce on the bed. More often than not, being little just came over him, now. He rarely had to coax himself into the mindset. So after a few more moments of impatient squirming he crawled up behind Hannibal and then over him, straddling his middle with his hands on Hannibal’s chest.

“Daddy,” he whispered. “Daddy, wake up.”

Hannibal made a sleepy groaning noise, one Will knew very well was faked. “It’s very early, little girl.”

“Is not,” Will insisted. “The sun is up. I wanna see the snow.” Hannibal had gotten him thick tights and a heavy pink coat for over his dresses once the weather had turned cold, and he rarely got to wear them since Hannibal was obsessive about keeping his little one warm. “It’s Christmas, I wanna play in the snow.”

Hannibal rubbed his eyes and smiled warmly up at Will. “It is Christmas, isn’t it? Shall we go see if Santa Claus came?”

Will laughed. “What?”

“Santa Claus,” Hannibal repeated, sitting up and wrapping his arms tight around Will. “I know you know who that is, we’ve read so many stories.”

“Yeah,” Will said with another laugh, “but he doesn’t come *here.”*

“Doesn’t he?” Hannibal asked, raising an eyebrow. Will went very still in his lap.

“Daddy,” he whispered, “Daddy, *did* Santa come?”

“Let’s get you dressed and we’ll go find out.”

Will had gone to sleep completely naked the night before, but he couldn't say he was too enthused about going to the nursery to get dressed when there might be a *present* downstairs.

But he did go, as Daddy led him, and he did let Daddy dress him in panties and socks, and his nightie, which Will laughed about. "This isn't getting dressed, Daddy,"

"It will do until we see what Santa brought," Hannibal said, kissing the top of Will's head. "Who knows, perhaps he's brought you a lovely dress you'd like to immediately put on, hmm?"

Will's eyes went wide. A new dress! He had so many, and Daddy always bought him the best ones, but a *new* dress! Will squirmed in anticipation, but obediently held Daddy's hand as they went downstairs together. Some of the dogs were milling around and Will sank to his knees to hug and greet them all as Hannibal stoked up the fire for the day. Once the dogs had been given they due attention, Will opened the door to the back yard for them to go out, frolicking in the snow, immediately wanting to dig it up and nose in it.

"Sweetheart?" Will turned, Hannibal had a smile on his face that made him melt. "Come see what's under the tree."

The night before, there had been nothing under the tree. Partly because they didn't have that many gifts to give each other, and partly because of the dogs. Buster had a tendency of getting into things he really shouldn't get into. Now, beneath the tree was a veritable array of brightly colored presents of different sizes. Bows and ribbons tied around them, big ones, little ones, flat ones, tall ones!

"Daddy!" Will looked at Hannibal like he'd hung the moon. "Did Santa bring me all of these?"

"It looks like it." Hannibal settled himself down by the pile, holding out a hand for Will. Will settled in next to him, Hannibal's arm snug around his waist. He was a bit overwhelmed by it all. Everything else he owned had come piece by piece, over several months. This was a lot at once, all completely unexpected. He didn't know what to do.

Hannibal waited for a moment, but when Will seemed unable to reach out, he selected the first box, large but light. "Here. Try this one."

Will opened it with shaking hands. Inside was the new dress he'd been promised, carefully folded, with a big bow in the back and a skirt that was just as loose and swishy as he liked it. This one was a deep blue, almost black, and when Will looked close he could see that the fabric shimmered.

"This is a nicer dress," Hannibal explained gently, "not for playing outside in. This is an indoor dress, only."

Will nodded mutely, still tracing fingers reverently over soft fabric. "I don't want to wear it today," he finally said, voice full of reluctance. "I want to play in the snow."

"I think we can find something for that, too," Hannibal said, nudging Will towards the boxes.

Brand new colored pencils came first, and then a dress for Nancy that was identical to Will's new one, and nearly made him burst out of his skin from sheer excitement. "I have to get her from upstairs!" He yelped, only to be dragged back down into Hannibal's lap. Hannibal pressed a laughing kiss to his cheek.

"Presents first, silly girl."

Puzzles, a soft toy dog that looked like his bear, just as scruffy and silky when Will cuddled it. A train set made from wood, so intricately carved that Will was almost scared to touch it. And then…

"Daddy is that a play dress?" He asked. It was overalls with a skirt, and Will had never seen anything he wanted to wear more. It was soft and light blue and as pretty as any of his dresses, but this one he could wear outside, he knew, without worrying he'd rip or dirty it.

"Keep going, sweetheart."

Will was drowning in wrapping paper, but he kept going. He uncovered actual overalls next, denim and embroidered with animals and flowers, and it delighted him. Some soft shirts to wear under, some more socks, two pairs of sneakers - one that lit up.

And then the last present, the biggest one. Will sat on his knees to tear the paper down from the top, and gasped when he realized what it was. A dollhouse, one that would come up to his stomach when he stood to his full height. It, too, was made of wood, and hand painted. Within, tiny pieces of furniture, sheets on the bed, pots on the stove, little people with painted smiles sitting in the main room on the little sofas.

Will was enchanted by it. He had no idea if he could play with it but he knew he couldn't take his eyes off it.

"Daddy, look," Will whispered, awed. The little girl doll had a blue dress, not exactly like his favorite, but close enough for him to smile. The daddy doll wore a tie.

Hannibal leaned around Will to push a tiny button Will hadn't seen. The little lights on and around the house came on. Will gaped at them.

"They have *electricity* ."

It was perfect. It was everything Will would have wanted as a child, had he only known it was something he could have had. He wanted to play. He wanted to move the dolls through the house, and buy more little furniture, and make up stories like he'd never gotten to do before.

Will's chest hurt. He sat back, in his nightie and socks with the cute bows on them, surrounded by more toys and soft clothes than he'd ever owned, next to a man who loved him and cherished him and would no doubt make him a hot, delicious breakfast in a few minutes. And then dress him in his new clothes, brush out his hair, maybe tie a ribbon into it if Will was in the mood for such things- and he thought he might be, today. Take Will out in the snow. Let him run wild with the dogs, let him laugh and play and just be *himself.*

“Sweetheart?”

Everything *hurt* . Will curled up into a tiny ball, arms around his knees and face buried there, and began to sob.

This wasn’t meant for him, this has never been in Will Graham’s life plan for himself. None of this had been. Not Hannibal with his passion and adoration of Will that was so entire it felt physical even when he wasn’t near. Not the desire to be small again, let alone wear dresses, play with dolls, color in… none of it. Yet here it was laid out before him, beneath the most magnificent Christmas tree he’d ever had in any house he’d ever lived in.

It was too much.

It was too good.

“Will?”

“Sorry, I’m sorry,” Will sobbed, and a laugh broke through right after. He sat up just enough to wipe his eyes and shift to wrap his arms around Hannibal instead. “It’s perfect. All of it is perfect. You’re perfect. Thank you.”

Hannibal held him tight, pulling Will into his lap to rock him gently. “My sweet, lovely little girl,” he whispered, rubbing Will’s back gently. “Precious thing, I want to give you everything.”

“I know,” Will said with another watery laugh, “I know, and I don’t know how to thank you for it.”

“By letting me,” Hannibal said firmly.

“Always.”

They stayed like that for a moment, wrapped tightly in each other before Hannibal nudged him back again. “Let’s get you in some nice warm clothes and then have some breakfast, hmm? Why don’t you go ahead and pick.”

The overall dress turned out to be meant for warmer weather, but Will got to wear regular overalls and a pastel pink sweater with sparkles woven into the yarn. Hannibal fed him pancakes and wiped his face when they were done, and then sat Will down to braid his hair while Will squirmed impatiently. Will had conceded to growing his hair out, but only until it just barely touched his shoulders. Hannibal braided back two small sections and tied them together with a bow, keeping it out of Will’s eyes and giving him a slightly softer look.

“Sneakers, sweetheart. Do you need help with them?”

Will smiled and swung his feet. “Yes please, Daddy.”

One pair had velcro rather than laces and Will held his foot obediently still for Hannibal to work them on and secure them to his feet. They were comfortable and Will wriggled his toes

in them. They'd get wet from the snow, and then have to be set by the fireplace to dry off, and that was okay. That was more than okay.

When Will was ready he tugged Hannibal's arm. "Come play with me, Daddy."

"Oh?" Hannibal's eyes narrowed in pleasure and he considered the mess in the living room. He'd done the dishes the night before, when he'd moved all of the presents under the tree for Will to find. "I suppose I could."

"Please please please!" Will grinned. "I'll wait for you. I won't go out til you're ready, Daddy, I promise!"

"Alright," Hannibal kissed the top of Will's head and cupped his cheek. "Give Daddy five minutes."

In no world would it take Hannibal five minutes to get ready, but Will didn't question him. It didn't matter. The weather was perfect, the snow clean and crunchy outside where the dogs hadn't yet rolled in it. Will couldn't wait to get out there, he couldn't wait to laugh until his face hurt, and to see Hannibal smile.

And Hannibal did smile, when he returned with gloves, scarves, and hats for both of them, Will's in a pastel blue, his own in a more sensible black. He smiled when Will went tumbling with a dog into a snow drift, when Will demanded to build a snowman that ended up too tall and slightly lopsided.

He even smiled at the little pout Will gave him when he insisted it was time to go inside.

"You're shivering, little one," he pointed out.

"Only because there's snow in my socks," Will grumbled, but he came when he was called and accepted warm kisses to his frozen nose. Hannibal set him before the fire in a dryer set of overalls, and he lounged there with the dogs, doodling pictures with his new colored pencils, happy and warm and *content* .

Hannigram AU on AO3 by Stratumgermanitivum & Whiskeyandspite
Everything Nice

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

“I don’t need a nursery.”

“Every little girl has a nursery,” Hannibal countered. “Where else would we keep your pretty dresses and toys?”

Will finds it hard to adapt to being so well cared for.

Chapter Notes

A little out of linear timeline but only by a little (this is before Christmas, for instace, etc) it shouldn't throw you too much, we hope!

No warnings for this one, just a small tantrum when baby is overwhelmed.

Three days after they moved in, before they had actually unpacked anything in the nursery (intentionally so, as it turned out), movers came again. Hannibal had tucked all Will’s toys into the Master bedroom, and Will watched suspiciously from the window as they carried in a beautiful twin-sized bed frame, white painted wood with canopy posts.

“I don’t like it,” he insisted when Hannibal came to check on him. He was a mess of ruffles on the floor, and he had spitefully unpacked every single toy and left it somewhere in the room.

“You haven’t even seen it yet,” Hannibal reasoned.

“I saw it out the window.”

Hannibal settled down next to him, pulling Will into his lap. “But not fully put together,” he said. “Not lovingly decorated for my princess.”

Will snorted. “I’m not a princess.”

“My sweet little one,” Hannibal corrected. “Beautiful girl.” His fingers found Will’s sides, tickling him through the soft fabric.

Will shrieked and wriggled, trying to free himself, and when he called mercy, voice pulling tight, Hannibal let up, kissing his cheek. Will tucked his knees up to sit in Hannibal’s lap

properly, fiddling with a button on his shirt.

“I don’t need a nursery.”

“Every little girl has a nursery,” Hannibal countered. “Where else would we keep your pretty dresses and toys?”

“Here,” Will replied without hesitation, “like we always have.”

“Daddy needs room for his suits, sweetheart,” Hannibal laughed, kissing Will’s temple. “Come on, let Daddy show you what he’s made for his little girl.”

Will went, reluctant and pouting, but he went, hand in Hannibal’s and shuffling his socked feet on the floor.

The nursery room was airy and open, huge windows looked out over the backyard - no chance of anyone seeing such a blatantly pink room from the driveway. The space itself wasn’t what bothered Will, it was that Hannibal felt it necessary. Like he was dumping Will off at a daycare because he was too busy to look after him like he used to.

It was stupid, he knew it was, but he couldn’t help himself the thoughts.

There were box-shaped shelves along the walls for Will’s toys, and a small bookshelf slowly filling up with fairy tales and classics. A purple rug that felt ridiculously soft under his feet. A small table low to the floor for his crayons. A little dresser that, at this point, mostly served as a place to put a lamp. Will’s underwear and socks didn’t take up *that* much space.

The bed, though, really was the highlight of the room. The sheets and comforter were a crisp white, with pink flowers dotting the comforter. The canopy was also bright pink, but sheer and glittery. It hung low enough and thick enough that the ties could clearly be unbound to surround the bed entirely, sealing Will safely away behind a sparkly curtain.

He wanted it. He wanted it *badly* . He just wanted it over *their* bed in *their* room.

“I don’t like it,” Will said stubbornly. Hannibal sighed.

“It would just be for naps, sweetheart,” he coaxed. “I would never make you sleep apart from me at night.”

“I like napping with *Daddy,”* Will whined.

“But you need more sleep than Daddy does.”

This was unfairly true. Hannibal could exist on five hours a night, but even big Will was cranky and feverish without a full night and a nap. He slept better now than he ever had.

“No.”

“Will,” Hannibal said gently, “is there something you need to say to me?”

Hannibal had prompted Will for a safeword every step of the way, and Will had refused to give it. He *hated* using it, and Hannibal knew that.

Frustrated, Will stomped his foot. “No!”

Hannibal tilted his head at him. “Remember your manners, sweetheart. Or does Daddy need to remind you?”

Will swallowed, shook his head. He didn’t want to make Hannibal angry, but he also didn’t want to be in here alone. It felt like some terrifyingly final thing, that this was permanent, and regular, and accepted in their household, even though Will didn’t need it that often.

He didn’t.

“No, Daddy, I’ll be good.”

“That’s my girl,” Hannibal kissed Will’s forehead gently and stroked his hair, expression warm as he regarded the tension in him. “Why don’t you bring all your toys into here while Daddy makes you a snack?”

Will made a sound in his throat but nodded, and Hannibal stepped out of the room.

Maybe this was it? Maybe Hannibal had finally grown tired of this roleplay, finally realized that Will was a massive investment of energy that he couldn’t afford, and wanted to lock him in a room where he could entertain himself whenever his mind drove him to being little. That was the only logical, reasonable explanation for it, in Will’s mind.

He left the nursery without a word and climbed into their bed when he got to the bedroom. He didn’t move to pick up any of his toys, he just watched them, arms wrapped around his knees and chin resting atop as he pouted.

When Hannibal returned a little while later, Will hadn’t moved. He cast his eyes to the man in the doorway and swallowed before looking away.

“Sweetheart, what did Daddy ask you to do?”

Will licked his lips. “To put my toys in the nursery,” he replied softly.

“Then why are they still here?”

“Because I hate the nursery!” Will frowned and buried his face in his knees again. “I don’t want it, Daddy, I want to stay here with you.”

Hannibal frowned. “You *are* with me,” he said gently, settling onto the edge of the bed next to Will. “You’re much too little to be left on your own.”

Words that normally would have flooded Will with warmth today stabbed him too deep.

“You’re leaving me alone in the stupid nursery!” Will said accusingly, lashing out with his foot to kick Hannibal’s thigh.

A large hand wrapped firmly around Will's ankle. Will looked up into the sternest, fiercest glare he'd ever seen on his Daddy's face.

"Do we kick in this household, little girl?"

Thick guilt twisted sick in Will's stomach. Sensibility whispered that he should just come up for a bit and *talk* to Hannibal, but he didn't want to come up. He wanted to be little. He wanted Hannibal to just *know* why he was upset. He wanted his Daddy to *want* him and he was *furious* that he didn't.

" *I* do," he said, kicking out with his other foot.

Hannibal pressed both of his ankles to the bed, gently enough not to hurt but hard enough to understand that he was not to move them again.

"That's enough," Hannibal stared Will down, until his face crumpled and he whined, beating his fists against the bed when he couldn't kick. It lasted all of two minutes, and when Will was done, Hannibal let his feet go and sat closer, tugging Will near with an arm around his waist.

"You keep telling me you're a big girl," Hannibal said. "And big girls don't react this way. They use their words and they ask questions. Only little babies kick and pout."

"I'm not a baby," Will said, but his voice was wet, his brows still drawn. Hannibal caught his chin and lifted it, reading Will as much as he could before stroking his thumb against his bottom lip.

"You know what happens when you're rude to Daddy this way," Hannibal said softly, and the relief that washed over Will was palpable. He swallowed and nodded. "Alright. Will you move on your own or do you need Daddy to move you?"

Will sniffed and slipped from the bed, moving to stand at Hannibal's side. When Hannibal guided him to bend, he did so with a small sound, catching his hands against the carpet. His skirt covered his head entirely and enveloped him in forgiving, warm darkness. When Hannibal slid down his panties, Will squirmed but didn't try to get away.

He took his spanking quietly, but when Hannibal helped him up again, Will was crying, silent tears wetting his cheeks and sticking his eyelashes together. Hannibal dried his face with his hands, gentle touches, soothing sounds when Will sobbed quietly.

"Come here, sweetheart," he pulled Will into his lap again and held him close. "Daddy's got you, it's alright."

It *wasn't* alright. Will felt twisty and gross and overwhelmingly *sad* for reasons he couldn't entirely articulate.

"Don't leave me," he begged, gripping the collar of Hannibal's sweater, tight enough that the fabric twisted and stretched. Hannibal didn't stop him, too busy cupping Will's chin to look into his eyes with a frown.

“Sweetheart-“

“Don’t leave me, Daddy!” Will’s voice went high and strained, tears coming faster. “Don’t leave me, don’t make me go away! I can’t, I need you, please-“

Alarmed, Hannibal hushed him, pulling Will close to tuck his face into Hannibal’s neck. “Hush, little one, hush. Neither of us is going anywhere.”

Will’s breath hitched in a wordless sob. Hannibal began to rock, holding Will tightly.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Hannibal repeated firmly, “there is nothing that could take me from you.”

Will’s soft wails continued for a few moments more, clinging to Hannibal and crying against him. Then he eased his breathing, trying to match it to Hannibal’s. His fingers relaxed a little on his death grip on Hannibal’s sweater. He let Hannibal take more of his weight. Not long after, Hannibal ducked his head to see Will was dozing against him, exhausted by his emotional outburst.

Carefully, so as not to wake his little girl, Hannibal lay back on the bed, holding Will against him. He hadn’t anticipated such a response. Will wasn’t someone who jumped at change, but he had never reacted so violently to anything in his little-space as he had to the nursery. Perhaps Hannibal had misread something? Perhaps Will had wanted something entirely different from him and he’d gotten it wrong?

Hannibal didn’t wake Will, he just held him, staring at the ceiling and wondering what he could do to make it right. If it was truly so upsetting to him, Hannibal would close the room up. The bed was easy to return, as was the furniture. And he could find another place to store his suits, in the end.

They were just clothes.

The man he loved, the man in his arms, was what mattered most.

When Will did stir, Hannibal hushed him preemptively, in case he came up just as panicked as when he went down, but Will just groaned softly and stretched against him. For a while, neither spoke and when Will did, he was his adult self.

“I’m sorry.”

“We handled it,” Hannibal reminded him gently. “Clean slate.”

Will shrugged. A faint aura of shame had settled over him, and he couldn’t shake it.

“You had some concerns,” Hannibal prompted. When Will did not immediately respond, he tried again. “I’m not going to leave you, Will.”

Will resisted the urge to hide his face. That was childish, and he wasn’t anybody’s child right now. “The nursery…” he said slowly. Now that he was saying it out loud, he felt a little silly. “I don’t want you to put me away.”

“I don’t expect you to *live* in there, Will.

“No.” Will shook his head, struggling to find the words to explain it. “I don’t want… I don’t want you to send me there so you don’t have to deal with me. If you’re bored of this, I want you to tell me. I don’t want to do it on my own.”

“Will,” Hannibal gently eased Will from himself so he could sit up, watching Will stretch before he curled his legs beneath himself as well. It was strange seeing him in a dress when he wasn’t little, and it was impossible to describe to anyone but each other just how Hannibal knew the difference. “I’m not abandoning you.”

Abandonment requires expectation.

Will drew his bottom lip between his teeth before letting it go with a sigh.

“I wanted to create a space where you could entirely immerse yourself,” Hannibal explained. “A place where everywhere you looked, you were Daddy’s little girl. No sign of Will Graham to jolt you back, no reminders of the world beyond our own until you need to enter it again.”

“I can’t -” Will sighed and tried again. “I can’t imagine that space without you in it.”

“I will be in it,” Hannibal assured him, sitting closer, setting a hand to Will’s knee and gently squeezing. “It is merely a relocation, not detachment.”

“But… the bed -”

“You needn’t use it if it distresses you,” Hannibal told him. “It’s there if you ever want to play in it, to make believe, to hide your toys. It’s there if you choose to nap in it. It isn’t a prison, or a cage, Will, never that.”

“And if I never go near it?”

There was a hint of something in Will’s eyes, a longing Hannibal politely pretended not to see.

“Then it will merely be a decoration for your play, and I will not be the slightest bit disappointed.”

Will searched Hannibal’s face for any sign of dishonesty, and relaxed when he found none. “Alright,” he said, sinking back into Hannibal’s side.

Despite the mutual understanding, Will still skirted the nursery whenever he could. Hannibal was constantly reminding him to pick up his toys, and constantly stumbling over them anyway.

“What if you colored while Daddy made lunch?” He suggested one day.

“Okay,” Will had said, but when Hannibal turned around, he had the entire contents of his art box spread out across the breakfast bar.

“Daddy needs that space to work on, sweetheart, why don’t you go upstairs?”

Will considered him, bringing his thumb up to chew against gently. For a moment, neither said anything, or moved at all, and then Will started to put his crayons back into their box.

“I don’t actually feel like coloring,” he said when he’d cleared up. Hannibal opened his mouth to say something but thought better of it.

Once in a while, he could coax Will into the nursery with the promise of being there with him. Hannibal would sit with his back against the bed and watch Will build bridges over his legs with his construction blocks, or obediently hold Nancy for him while Will rummaged about looking for what dress he wanted her to wear next.

When Hannibal was there, the nursery was easier to deal with for Will. It felt like an extension of the house. He couldn’t figure out why he had such a block against the space being his own, when logically he understood - and Hannibal had proven to him, now, time and again - that he was not being banished to it.

Sometimes, when he was Will Graham, he would lean his shoulder against the door and look in, toothbrush in his mouth as he washed up for the day, and he felt nothing whatsoever. No panic, no shame, nothing. It was just a room. Other days he had to close the door to be able to pass it at all.

It was strange.

He didn’t want to get into it.

After Christmas, Hannibal set Will’s new dollhouse up against the wall just under the window. It was enormous and beautiful, and was enough to draw Will into the room more and more on his own, even if he didn’t stay in it.

He would trail his fingers longingly over the dolls, the tiny beds, the itty bitty paintings on the walls. He wanted nothing more than to flop onto his belly and play with it for hours.

Instead, he grabbed an armful of stuffed animals and marched downstairs so they could use Hannibal as a jungle gym.

The room grew fuller. It stopped looking like a bare bones mockery of itself, instead looking like a child’s actual room, albeit exceedingly tidy. Will slowly gathered enough toys to fill the shelves. His play clothes and sturdier nighties took up residence in the formerly empty dresser.

Some days, it was difficult to keep Will on track. He was so easily distracted by the room and it’s wonderful contents, since he spent so very little time exploring them.

“Will,” Hannibal said, for the third time in as many minutes, “come here, please, and let Daddy get you dressed.”

Will was on his stomach in front of the doll house, absolutely enraptured. Though his play was usually completely silent due to embarrassment, even his discussions with Nancy, he’d

recently started whispering stories to himself if he thought Hannibal wasn't paying attention. Hannibal was always paying attention.

Will had wandered over to the dollhouse the moment he stepped into the room, and then again while Hannibal was depositing his things in the laundry basket and selecting undergarments. Now, he was in nothing but panties and his thick winter thigh-highs, swinging his feet and completely unaware Hannibal was speaking to him.

"If you don't come here," Hannibal tried, "I'll pick a dress *for* you." Will's independence was alternatively a source of pride or completely gone, depending on his mood, but he liked to pick his clothes.

That seemed to cut through some of the fuzz in Will's daydreaming and he turned to look over his shoulder. The house was warm, always well-heated by the fireplace, and it was only looking out the window that Will could tell that it was winter at all. He frowned and shook his head.

"No, Daddy, I wanna choose."

"Then come here," Hannibal repeated. This time Will did, turning to look over his shoulder at the dollhouse again before turning his attention to the closet. He had almost two dozen dresses now and some days it entirely blew his mind. Other days, when he was comfortably deep into his headspace, it didn't surprise him at all. Daddy said it was his job to spoil his little girl.

He chose the beige dress, far from his favourite but one he could roll about on the floor in without feeling too guilty about it. He still took very good care of his clothes, his Daddy had taught him well, but sometimes he did get a bit excited and things tore. He just knew not to lie about it anymore.

Will let Hannibal dress him, turning to kiss him on the cheek when he was done. "Daddy, I want to host a dinner party like you do."

Hannibal blinked at him, bringing his hand up to stroke gentle knuckles down Will's face.

"A dinner party? Who would you like to invite?"

"You and Nancy," Will said immediately. "The others I'll consider."

Hannibal fought a smile, Will was lovely when he let himself be truly little; Hannibal wondered sometimes if this was what the young Will would have been like had he had the freedom to properly be a child.

"Perhaps, while you consider, a tea party instead?"

Will tilted his head thoughtfully. "Can we use your glass teapot?"

"I've a better idea." Turning back to the closet, Hannibal fetched a box from the shelf that ran along the top. Will, having no reason to look away from the dresses, hadn't noticed it.

Hannibal set the box on Will's unused bed and opened it. Inside, nestled carefully into paper packing materials, was a delicate China tea set. White, with pink flowers, to match Will's bedding.

Will was practically vibrating in place. Hannibal surprised him with something about once a month, and was beginning to hint at a birthday party once the day rolled around, but it never ceased to thrill him.

"It's mine?" He asked, running his fingers over the tiny spoon for the sugar bowl.

"It is," Hannibal confirmed. "We can use it, if you clean off the coloring table while I brew the water."

Will looked anxiously from the small table to the door. He didn't like to let Hannibal out of his sight if he could help it. "You need help carrying, though."

Hannibal leaned to kiss his cheek, stroking Will's hair gently. "I can manage, sweetheart. You get the table ready, and make sure Nancy has the right dress on."

Will chewed his lip for a moment before slowly nodding. Watching Hannibal as he went to the door, out the door, down the stairs. For a moment he wanted nothing more than to run out after him, catching him while Hannibal was still on the stairs. But as he listened to Hannibal's retreating footsteps he found that he was… alright.

He was alright in the nursery alone, he had things to do.

He found Nancy, taking his time as he always did to work his fingers through her lovely curls. She could wear the dress she had on - the dark blue one whose twin Will loved the most. He cleared away his coloring things, setting them carefully into his craft box. Then he took up the tea set Daddy had bought him, carefully placing three settings around the table for them all.

By the time he was finished, Hannibal was upstairs again, cradling the kettle and a box of the tea he knew Will preferred, watching him with a soft smile on his face.

"That's my girl," he praised, moving to set the kettle to the floor, crossing his legs gracefully as he sat down at one of the places laid out.

Will flushed happily at the praise. He took to compliments far better like this than he did as Will Graham, but then, Will Graham would not sit delicately with beige skirts fluffed out around him, bow slightly crooked in his hair from his refusal to sit still for dressing. He would not carefully pour delicate cups of tea, or giggle when Hannibal produced a tin of cookies he'd made while Will napped on the couch the day before.

The beautiful, brilliant creature before him both was and wasn't Will Graham, and Hannibal loved him in every form.

The tea party took up nearly an hour, between giggled conversations about parties they had never been to, and a more serious debate about dinner - the more they played, the more Will

began to affect childish attributes, and while Hannibal would never discourage such things, he'd recently developed a disdain for several vegetables that he did not have in his adult life, and which Hannibal was finding difficult to navigate.

When it was over, Will helped Hannibal wash the delicate china, still as awed and reverent as he'd been upstairs.

"We can have another tea party soon?" He asked.

"There are many things we can do in your nursery."

Will beamed at him. Wrapping his arms around Hannibal's middle and just holding him, feeling Hannibal warm and real and safe against him. "Thank you, Daddy," he whispered.

Most weekends, at least one day Will spent entirely little. It wasn't by arrangement, just a pattern Hannibal had noticed. On Saturday mornings he would be crawled on by his little girl kissing him awake with sweet presses of lips to his cheeks. Sometimes, Will wanted to play and nap, following Hannibal around for snacks, but otherwise not bothering him. Sometimes, Will wanted to play in a different way, and Hannibal allowed those discoveries with just as open a mind as anything else.

But what remained constant for Will when he was little, always, was his desperate need for naps throughout the day.

Hannibal looked up from his book, one hand gently stroking Will's curls from his face, and found him comfortably asleep. Lips slightly parted, a hand up against his mouth, his other curled in his skirt, gently holding. Sweet, lovely thing. He'd raced around with the dogs outside before playing with the dollhouse while Hannibal sat beside him, helping with the narrative. Then they'd gone downstairs for stories by the fire.

Hannibal turned off his iPad, setting it aside, and eased Will's head from his lap to the couch so he could properly stand. He gathered Will close, hushing him when he fussed and nuzzled against Hannibal's chest, and carried him upstairs.

Will nearly woke when Hannibal tucked him in under the sheets, but a soft kiss to his brow and gentle fingers in his hair pulled him back under. Hannibal pulled the sheer bed curtains free of their ties, turned on the nightlight, and left the door cracked in case Will woke distressed, as he sometimes did.

Will woke in stages. Once upon a time, he'd woke sweaty and fearful every time he closed his eyes, but since becoming Hannibal's little girl, he'd slept more peacefully. Nightmares still came, but not as constantly.

Now he woke slowly. First, thumb from his mouth, where it seemed to end up in his sleep lately even though he was much too big for that. Next, sleepy little stretches, each limb spread out on a comfortable mattress. Then, sniffs and snuffles, childish sounds he felt comfortable making now that he was Hannibal's. Eyes came last, slow, comfortable.

He was lost in a haze of soft, glowing pink. Sitting up, he saw that he'd been tucked into the nursery bed. The nightlight created a soothing effect through the sheer curtains. Will hadn't even known he *had* a nightlight.

For a few minutes, he just sat, enjoying the soft play of pink light over the sheets. It wasn't so bad. The mattress was almost as soft as their bed in the master, and he'd felt so warm and safe.

But it wasn't napping with Hannibal, and there was still that shameful fear that Hannibal might never nap with him again if he slept here. Or that he was bad or weird for wanting this, for wanting something so permanent and constant when it was supposed to be a game.

"Daddy?" He called, pushing through the gauzy curtains.

He heard Hannibal's unhurried footsteps in the corridor and then there he was in the doorway, smiling at Will. "Hello, sweetheart. How was your nap?"

"Good," Will told him honestly. He stifled a yawn against the back of his hand and swung his feet down to rest on the floor. "Did I sleep a long time, Daddy?"

"Just an hour or so," Hannibal told him, coming into the nursery and crouching by Will's feet. "It gave Daddy some time to make preparations for dinner."

"Does that mean we can play with the dogs together for a while?" Will asked, swinging his feet gently as he watched Hannibal, his smile growing. He'd napped in the nursery by himself for the first time, and it was okay. Daddy was still here, and he was proud of his little girl, and he wanted to spend time with Will, still - nothing had changed.

"We'll have to put on your big coat," Hannibal told him, stroking over Will's knee before standing and holding his hands out for Will to take. "And your warm boots, but we absolutely can."

Will stood, immediately wrapping his arms around Hannibal and just breathing him in.

He was okay.

They were okay.

This was okay.

"Thank you, Daddy," he sighed, kissing Hannibal's cheek and nuzzling him before pulling back, a grin already wide on his face. "We can throw snowballs!"

Hannibal's eyes narrowed in pleasure and he leaned in to kiss the tip of Will's nose. "Then we'll need your gloves, as well."

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

He knew Hannibal never asked for anything from him, knew that he got as much pleasure out of Will being his little girl as Will did being so. But there was one thing that Will hadn't offered before that he knew would go over well.

He left the office smiling, drawing his hand over his rough beard as he got into the car to drive home.

Hannibal hosts a party for other Daddys to meet his little girl.

Chapter Notes

There is mild (Very mild) implication and allusion to arousal here but no actual sex in little space. Next chapter, however...

Will remembered being told about the party. Hannibal had told him when he was little and when he'd just come home from work. They'd even put it on the calendar so Will remembered. And the closer they got to the day, the more nervous Will felt.

Hannibal was a fantastic host, he always had been. Even now when they shared a house he still hosted at his home in Baltimore when certain events required the lavishness he could provide. Will had been to his parties and dinners before. But he had been as Will Graham. He had never been as Daddy's little girl.

And this party was specifically about Daddy's little girl.

"Just a small gathering," Hannibal had promised. "Intimate. Some close friends of mine who have lovely little girls and boys at home themselves. Daddy's been wanting to show you off for a long, long time sweetheart."

Will squirmed in pleasure and gave Hannibal a look through his fringe. "Will I get a new dress?"

"Oh yes," Hannibal promised. "A very special dress."

And new socks, and new panties, because Hannibal liked his little girl to match in her pretty clothes, even though no one else would see. Will felt overwhelmed by the adoration as he

often did, and an idea struck him one day when he was grading papers during his office hours that had him pause and sit back, staring into space for a good half hour.

He knew Hannibal never asked for anything from him, knew that he got as much pleasure out of Will being his little girl as Will did being so. But there was one thing that Will hadn't offered before that he knew would go over well.

He left the office smiling, drawing his hand over his rough beard as he got into the car to drive home.

He found Hannibal in the den, browsing recipes on his tablet. Will nudged it aside, crawling into Hannibal's lap and wrapping his arms around his neck.

"Hello," Hannibal said warmly. Will nuzzled their noses together.

"Party's soon," he murmured.

"Very soon," Hannibal agreed. His hands rested warm on Will's lower back. "Nervous?"

Will shuddered pleasantly. "A little. Mostly excited. You'll have to shave my legs beforehand."

"Don't worry." Hannibal's hands traveled up Will's back to tangle in his hair. "You'll be clean and pretty in your new things."

"Mm, I was hoping to be prettier than usual." Will caught one of Hannibal's hands, dragging it to cup his stubbled cheek.

Hannibal made a quiet sound in his throat, one of surprise and pleasure and longing, before leaning in to kiss Will gently. He'd suggested he shave Will before, but had always found him stoic in keeping that much of himself even in his little-space. He'd never pushed. And now -

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely," Will murmured, nosing him again. "I think it's time for a change. And this is as good a time as any."

"Lovely boy," Hannibal kissed him on the cheek, down to Will's jaw. They had time, if they wanted, to enjoy each other this way. Hannibal could feel Will hardening against him where he sat close. But he would never push this, either. "You're too good to me."

"Not half as good as I should be," Will replied, pressing their foreheads together as he just rested against Hannibal a moment more. Then he hummed and arched his back and brought his arms back to rest them on Hannibal's desk so he could see him better.

"Are you excited?"

"I am," Hannibal said. "You know how beautiful I find you. I confess I'm eager to show you off."

He would have said the same if Will hadn't offered to shave off his beard, and the knowledge warmed Will right through. "And dinner. Can't forget dinner."

"Of course. But the offerings will pale in comparison to the guest of honor."

Will laughed, grinning brightly. "Flatterer," he accused.

Hannibal pulled him closer, pressing kisses to his throat. "Someone needs to praise you. Let you know your worth."

"You could show me instead," Will suggested. "Get me all smooth and see how you like it."

Hannibal looked up at him, eyes dark. "You know I'll like it."

Will grinned, tilting his head back for Hannibal to kiss him again. They had the evening, the night together, and the day to get ready for the party. They could afford themselves some time to enjoy each other. Will reached for Hannibal's tie, winding it around his palm, and tugged him close.

"Go on, then," Will smiled. "The quicker you're done the quicker I get my mouth on you."

Hannibal purred, a low and pleased note, and his eyes hooded until they were almost closed. He tilted his head, just enough to be a nod, and kissed Will's wrist. "As you wish."

The party dress Daddy pulled from the closet was unlike any Will owned. It was much frillier, much poofier, and had a lot of bows on it. Will squirmed a little where he sat. The bows would match the ones at the tops of his socks and the front of his panties. He knew this wasn't a dress he could play in, but it was just so *pretty* .

When Daddy coaxed Will to stand so he could dress him, Will bounced to his feet.

The dress felt warm and comfortably heavy. It swished when he turned his hips and he didn't have to hold it out like he had to with his other dresses - this one stood out on its own.

"Come here, sweetheart, let Daddy do your hair."

Will had never had his hair curled before, he'd always thought it was curly enough, but the iron Daddy used made his hair look like Nancy's and Will loved it. For perhaps ten minutes, until he got bored and started to fidget.

"Be still, little one. I don't want to burn you."

That stilled Will for another minute or two before he began to swing his feet again.

"Sweetheart."

Will met Hannibal's eyes in the mirror. "What if people get here while we're doing this?"

"They won't."

“But what if they *do?”*

“Then they can wait a few minutes while I take care of my baby girl.”

A few more curls. Hannibal was more than halfway through, and Will knew he was getting a brand new bow for his hair, but he couldn’t stop wriggling.

“What if I don’t have enough toys downstairs?”

“You have half the nursery downstairs. And if you’ve forgotten something, you can come get it later.”

“What if the other D-daddies think my toys are stupid?”

“They won’t. They’re Daddies, little one, they know what baby girls need.”

“But what if-“

“Sweetheart.” Hannibal set the curling iron down on the counter, cupping Will’s jaw and tilting his head back so their eyes could meet. “I understand that you’re nervous. No one is going to be mean to you tonight. I would not let them.”

“I know, but-“

“Do you need a spanking to help settle you before the party starts?”

From the look on Hannibal’s face, it was not a threat. It was a genuine offer, an option for Will’s fraying nerves.

After a moment, Will shook his head. “No, Daddy.” he didn’t think he could handle seeing anyone after a spanking. He was always either very tired or very horny after one, and neither would bode well for a gathering. He would just have to suck it up. When Hannibal kissed his cheek, he hummed.

And he tried to sit still.

Without his beard, he looked very young in the mirror, and with his curls and his lovely dress, Will did think, for the first time, that he looked like Daddy’s little girl. He’d been teased at college and had been given the “prettiest boy AND girl” award by his classmates as a well-meaning joke, but this was the first time he looked in the mirror and felt… *pretty* .

As Hannibal finished curling his hair and ran his fingers through it to separate the curls a little more, Will bit his lip and tried to hide his smile. The new bow Daddy got out from the drawer matched his dress and was very big. Hannibal twisted strands of Will’s hair from his face and secured them at the top of his head with the bow and Will squirmed in pleasure.

“Can we go downstairs now?”

Hannibal smiled, bending to kiss Will’s temple. “Of course, little one. Go on.”

The dining room and living room hadn't been changed or rearranged much, except that Will had his own special place setting at the coffee table instead of the grown up table, and his toys were perched on one of the couches ready for him to play with. Daddy had said that all he had to do at the party was be himself. Will silenced the panicked voice at the back of his mind that screamed that this wasn't him, he was nothing like this, and moved to sit on the floor, his skirt poofing up around him as he did.

When Daddy's friends arrived, they talked to Daddy. About wine and business and adult things. Will hadn't seen any of these men before, at any of Hannibal's other gatherings, and his chest eased from the last tightness nerves had tensed up in him.

"My word, what a pretty little girl," one man said. He looked older than Daddy, he had a beard, and when he came near to Will he crouched down to be on his eye level. "And such a pretty party dress."

Will fought conflicting urges to run upstairs or to flip his skirt over his head and hide in the ruffles. Neither was a particularly rational urge, although the latter would probably go over better with a party full of Daddies.

"Thank you, sir," Will said, because it seemed like the polite thing to say. Over the man's shoulder, he saw Hannibal give him an encouraging nod. Emboldened, and desperate to learn to play along, Will added, "My Daddy bought it for me."

"You're a very lucky girl to have such a nice Daddy, aren't you?"

Will blushed, catching Hannibal's eye again. "Yeah," he said quietly.

The man left Will to his train again, but Will was still focused on the grown-ups. They'd taken the cue to start talking about *him* , and he couldn't help but eavesdrop. He was pretty sure he was meant to.

"She's a shy little thing, isn't she?"

"She is," Hannibal agreed. "But I never worry she'll wander off with a stranger."

As if he could take Will to the *park.* Will ducked his head to hide his grin.

"Such a lady, though. Sitting so nicely, so politely. You must be very proud."

Will squirmed, suddenly very aware of how he was sitting, legs tucked up under him, dress spread about him.

"She should come for a play date," another man said, and *this* man was so blatantly flirtatious that Will tucked his face against his arms on the table, hiding behind Nancy and her matching pink skirts.

"We should plan one," Hannibal replied, not even looking at Will, but Will still knew, like he always knew, that he could see him. "Perhaps take the girls for ice cream."

Will squeaked, hiding himself further, blushing furiously when his response drew a few sounds of amusement and patronizing coos. He couldn't do this, he'd go mad if he had to sit here with men talking about him like he wasn't even there, or worse yet, like he was and they knew it. No, he had to get the fuck up, and go upstairs, and change into normal clothes, and -

"Sweetheart?"

"Yes, Daddy?" Will knew he wouldn't move if the world was ending, with the way Hannibal was watching him. He smiled back, blush fetching on his bare cheeks.

"Would you like to tell us about your doll?"

No, Will absolutely did NOT want to tell them about -

"Nancy," he said, holding her out with both hands, enough to break eye contact with anyone trying to catch his gaze. "Her name is Nancy and she's my most special doll."

"She's very pretty," someone commented, stepping nearer and ducking down to look, the way adults always did when young kids showed them something mundane and uninteresting. "She has such lovely hair, just like yours."

Will *giggled* . "And she has my dress, too!"

It was like something else had taken over. Instinct, maybe, or perhaps he just finally knew how to play, after so many months of practice. He couldn't stop himself. He turned Nancy, showing off the big bow in her hair. "Daddy did our curls the same."

"I see," the man said, sounding very serious, as if they were discussing state secrets rather than hair bows. "You must be twins."

Will looked down at Nancy and then pulled her tight to his chest. "Yes," he decided firmly. "We're twins. Except I'm bigger."

The man laughed. Then he reached out and *ruffled Will's hair* , his fingers gentle in his curls before he pulled back and returned to the adults. Will stared after him, and that last little bit of hesitation shattered.

Why should he sit here, when Daddy and all the interesting things were over *there* ? This was a party about *him* , after all.

Will tucked Nancy gently onto the couch, so she wouldn't be stepped on, and then slowly crept up on Hannibal, until he could wrap both his arms around one of Hannibal's, interrupting boring grown-up talk.

"What are you up to, little one?" Someone asked.

"I'm lonely," Will said, turning big, wide eyes on Hannibal.

"That's never good," someone else added, and Hannibal stroked Will's hair gently.

“Have I been neglectful, sweetheart? I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, Daddy, I just want to be next to you.”

Hannibal kissed his cheek and Will nuzzled against him, almost shy when Hannibal was so openly affectionate with him. But no one looked askance, no one was disgusted or concerned or disturbed. To them, this was a normal as it was to Will and Hannibal and that… that was such a relief. It was *such* a relief.

The adult conversations continued and Will remained clinging to Hannibal, just swinging their joined hands vaguely back and forth. He reached up and tugged his curls, turning them over and over around his finger, he chewed the side of his thumb. When someone caught his eye, Will grinned and bounced on the balls of his feet before turning his face into Daddy’s arm again.

He was in his pretty party dress, with Daddy’s friends who all thought he was such a *lovely little girl* , and Will felt so safe.

For a moment, the feeling was almost overwhelming, nearly enough to bring him to tears, but he didn’t want to cry then, he wouldn’t.

“Daddy,” he stage-whispered, tugging Hannibal’s sleeve until he ducked his head to listen. “Daddy can I bring the puppies?”

They’d locked the dogs away for dinner, not for any reason but to avoid them getting underfoot, and to not overwhelm Will with having to keep an eye on them while he was little. But now that Will asked…

“Will you make sure they go out, little one?”

“Uh-huh,” Will smiled, turning to the gathered men. “They’re my puppies, I look after them all on my own.”

“Such a big girl.”

“Show us your puppies, sweetheart.”

In the time it took Will to free the dogs and set them loose in the back yard, he got distracted. It was easier like this, when he didn’t have to be responsible for anything, when his only job was to be himself, and who he was right now was an overexcited little girl.

Snow had fallen fresh only two days before. The dogs had run wild over some of it, but it was a big yard, and Will could see untouched snow a few yards away by the big tree. He stood shivering on the porch, in his pretty dress and socks and the Velcro sneakers he’d grabbed to let the dogs out. He hadn’t grabbed his coat. He’d only meant to be on the porch for a moment.

But it was *fresh snow* and there hadn’t been time to go out and play at all yesterday or this morning. Will forgot that he was meant to be watching the dogs, that he was meant to return

to the party, that there even *was* a party. He stepped down from the porch, hurrying over to the big tree.

He remembered he wasn't supposed to get his dresses dirty, but a few minutes kicking snow towards the dogs and drawing squiggles with his foot were fine. Just a minute.

It was nearly fifteen minutes when Hannibal came to check on him and saw Will bare armed and shivering halfway across the yard.

His first thought was to call out to him, but he never used Will's name when he was little, he didn't want to test what would happen if he did, today of all days. Instead he whistled for the dogs. It got Will's attention, as he'd hoped, and Hannibal watched with a frown as Will crunched back over to him.

"Sweetheart, you shouldn't be out there without your coat or proper shoes," he scolded softly, drawing a hand over Will's cold cheek. "You could get very sick."

"I w-won't," Will told him, rubbing his hands up and down his arms as he looked guiltily up at his Daddy. "It was just a little while. And I didn't get my dress dirty, see?"

He hadn't, in truth. The snow had been deep enough that when Will had walked the skirt had dragged over it rather than sunk through it to get to the mud beneath. This didn't seem to placate Daddy, though. Hannibal folded his arms and Will made a quiet sound as he bit his lip a little harder.

"You worried Daddy," Hannibal told him, and Will's shoulders came up to his ears.

"I'm sorry."

"You know you're never to go out without your coat," Hannibal continued. Will realized that the entire party was in the dining room but close enough to hear the exchange and his cheeks suddenly burned. "I think someone needs to go on a time out and think about what she's done."

Will looked from Hannibal to the doorway, alarmed. "But Daddy, I'm sorry!"

"I know you are," Hannibal said, wrapping a hand gently around Will's wrist. "You're still going to time out."

"But… but they'll *see!"* Will hissed.

"They will," Hannibal agreed, checking Will's reaction. "That's what happens when little girls misbehave when company is over."

To Will's mingled horror and embarrassment, Hannibal led him not to the living room, but to the *dining* room, marching Will past all their guests and nudging him face first into the corner. "Stay here and think about what you've done until I come to get you.

Will stood there with both hands fisted in his skirt and his shoulders up around his ears. He could feel all eyes on him.

“You spoil her, Hannibal. I’d have taken my girl over my knee, party or no party.”

Will’s breathing hitched and he bit his lip not to make a sound. The very idea that Hannibal could take him over his knee, flip up his skirt and reveal him that way *in front of people* -

“It is her first time in company,” Hannibal replied. Will could hear the sound of cutlery on china as they started to eat without him. “She’s just nervous, you know how they act up when new people come by.”

“It’s true,” another voice, Will closed his eyes and pressed his forehead to the corner, fingers fiddling with a bow on his skirt to keep his hands busy. “My little boy is a perfect little gentleman until we have company. He’s getting better, though, they all do.”

“Oh, I’ve no doubt your little one will be a perfect little lady next time,” yet another voice. Hannibal hummed.

“I’m certain.”

“Shall we hold you to that, then?” someone asked, and the other men laughed. Will felt his cock stir between his legs and pressed the toes of his sneakers together nervously.

“You know I’m always up for a challenge.”

And so it went on, for what felt like forever, before Hannibal came to get Will from the corner and gave him a cuddle, promising that all was forgiven and Will was welcome to come and eat his dinner too if he wanted.

“Can I with you, Daddy?”

“Will you be a good girl?”

“Yes, Daddy, I promise,”

Hannibal pulled up an extra chair for Will, but Will ate practically in his lap, anyway. His shyness from before had returned; he was beet red whenever he was complimented on his manners, tucking his face into Hannibal’s shoulders.

Afterwards, Hannibal made him see all the guests out, standing in the doorway, cheeks flush, as every single gentleman touched him in some way. A hand in his hair. A pinch of his cheeks.

“Such a pretty thing.”

“Be a good girl for Daddy.”

“We’ll expect better manners next time.”

Will was trembling by the time the door closed, biting hard at his lower lip.

“Sweetheart?” Hannibal said gently, two fingers under Will’s chin to tilt his head up.

Will launched himself at him, arms thrown around his shoulders as he yanked Hannibal into a frantic kiss.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

> *“You should have seen yourself as I saw you tonight,” Hannibal murmured, lips tickling against stocking covered skin as he kissed from Will’s knee down towards his thigh. “As everyone saw you. You were radiant.”*

Chapter Notes

> This chapter is sexy fun times *in little space*, so if it's a squick, give this one a miss. It isn't plot-sensitive so you won't be missing key info. Follows on immediately from the previous chapter!

When Will pulled back he was panting, cheeks dark with blush, lips dark and eyes darker, and he was grinning.

“I haven’t had that much fun in years,” Will whispered, voice rough with need as he pushed up onto his toes and kissed Hannibal again. “Hannibal, please, I need you -”

“Do you have any idea how beautiful you are?” Hannibal told him, sounding just as wrecked. His hands found their way to Will’s hair and took out the bow before grasping a handful of curls and *tugging* . “Tempting, remarkable boy, you undo me.”

“Good,” Will grinned, dropping a hand between them to press between Hannibal’s legs. “Because now you can undo me.”

“Should we -”

“Nuh-uh,” Will smiled wider, eyes narrowed in mischief. “Just like this, and against whatever surface we find first.”

“You’ll ruin your pretty dress,” Hannibal said, but the look on his face said it was the most tempting idea he’d ever had.

Will tilted his head, fluttering his eyelashes. “Don’t you want me, Daddy?”

Hannibal shoved Will up against the door, attacking his throat with lips and teeth. Will moaned, hands clutching at Hannibal’s shoulders. “Not here,” he whined. “The living room. The couch.”

Somehow, they made it, Will kicking off his sneakers, Hannibal undoing his belt. Will tumbled backwards into the couch, dress billowing out around him. Hannibal took one thigh-high covered foot, kissing the ankle before setting it up onto the back of the couch, spreading Will wide for his perusal.

There was far too much fabric, but it only served to make everything seem more desperate. When Hannibal shoved Will's dress above his hips, he found himself with an armful of ruffles he could barely see Hannibal over.

"The panties-" Will cut himself off with a low moan as Hannibal merely tugged the fabric slightly to the side and slid a finger into him. "Where did you get lube?"

"I wasn't going to wait a single moment to have you, if you would allow it."

"Knew you got off on the dresses," Will muttered. In retaliation, Hannibal crooked his fingers and rubbed firmly until Will saw stars and arched off the couch.

"I get off on *you* , and the power you give me."

Will laughed, helpless and pleased, and pressed his toes to the floor. He was spread obscenely wide, his dress shoved up, his panties pulled aside… *God* it was debauched and he was here for it.

"You should have seen yourself as I saw you tonight," Hannibal murmured, lips tickling against stocking covered skin as he kissed from Will's knee down towards his thigh. "As everyone saw you. You were radiant."

Will grinned, eyes closing in a lazy blink as he tilted his hips and moaned when Hannibal's fingers found his prostate again, teasing. "I felt very pretty."

"You were beautiful." Hannibal added a third finger and Will hissed in anticipation.

"Daddy…" Hannibal's mouth was so close to Will's cock, now, straining against his panties, that he thought he was going to lose his mind. He smiled again, that cheshire grin, and his voice tilted into something younger for just a moment. "D'you think the other Daddies were jealous?"

"I think every one of them wished you were their little girl," Hannibal told him, kissing chastely over the head of Will's cock before slipping his fingers free. Will whined, squirming to try and get them back.

"But 'm not theirs, 'm yours, Daddy," he sighed, a squeal of delight escaping him when Hannibal yanked him a little further down the couch and stroked himself as he looked at Will spread out and eager before him.

"You are," Hannibal told him. He crouched over Will on all fours, tangling one hand in Will's curls. "You belong entirely to me, don't you, sweetheart?"

Will smiled, at once enticing lover and pleased little girl. "Why don't you show me, Daddy? I need you to prove it."

“I will.” Hannibal tugged the leg of Will’s panties to the side, lining himself up. “Open wide, baby, let Daddy feel you.”

Will was a wonder when he slid in, not quite acting, but certainly playing up things he already felt. His little gasps were higher than normal, sweet sounds as he adjusted to Hannibal’s girth inside him.

“Does it hurt, sweetheart?” Hannibal tilted Will’s head up, nuzzling their noses together.

“No,” Will murmured, “but it's a lot.” He reached for Hannibal’s free hand, tangling their fingers together.

“So good for Daddy,” Hannibal praised him, squeezing Will’s hand as he pulled back and slowly rocked back in. Beneath him Will squirmed and bit his lip. Without his beard he looked almost painfully young, and his curls spread around his head in a way that was damn near angelic. He was at once his Will and his little girl, and Hannibal groaned in pleasure as he thrust in a little harder the next time.

“Oh,” Will tilted his head up, furrowed his brows, and brought his leg down from the back of the couch to wrap around Hannibal’s middle, pulling him close. His other stretched out across the floor, opening his legs wider, pushing his toes harder to the rug to allow himself leverage to meet Hannibal’s thrusts.

He squeezed Hannibal’s hand and tugged his own hair with his other, gasping loudly with every deliberate push, grinning when Hannibal found his prostate and took to slowly tormenting it.

“Harder, Daddy,” he sighed, cheeks burning in pleasure. It was rare that Will found his mindsets mingling; more often than not he enjoyed sex while still dressed in his little clothes, but not being in that headspace. But once in a while there was the desire to be innocent, and giddy, and tempting. “You feel so good, so big, Daddy, please -”

“Daddy’s got you, sweetheart,” Hannibal breathed against his throat, tucking his mouth against the skin to suck a bruise there, pulling a keening, lovely noise from Will’s throat. “Daddy knows just what you need.”

“You do. You do, Daddy, *please.”* Will’s body felt stretched taught, skin tingling as Hannibal touched and kissed him. Will squeezed their hands together, thighs quivering.

“Sweet girl.”

“Oh!” Will moaned. He dug his heel into Hannibal’s back, rocking up into him. “Talk to me, I need you to talk to me.”

“Beautiful,” Hannibal told him. “Precious baby girl. Such a delicate little thing, let me take care of you.”

Will shook and trembled with every word. He couldn’t explain why these things sank into him and made his skin break out into goosebumps, but he felt like he was coming to pieces.

“God, I need you so badly.”

Hannibal bit gently at his throat and breathed against his skin, “my lovely little girl, come for Daddy.”

“Oh *fuck* ,” Will whimpered, his cock surging slick, wet heat into his panties as he arched up against Hannibal. He clenched hard, whining when Hannibal felt somehow *bigger* inside him, as though Will were actually more delicate than he was, more innocent. Will blinked rapidly, lips parted on heavy panting breaths as he shivered beneath Hannibal.

He hadn’t had an orgasm that intense in a long, long time. He could feel numbness tingling at the tips of his fingers and toes, could feel his own heartbeat in his belly and throat. His breathing was so loud in his ears and he was dizzy, so, so dizzy.

He dropped a hand to Hannibal’s hair and tugged him up to kiss, bringing up his other leg to curl around Hannibal as well, coaxing him into a more frantic rhythm, desperate to milk him to a climax just as intense. He groaned when Hannibal slid a palm over his stockinged thigh and grasped his ass, squeezing enough to pull a squeak from Will.

“You’ve made me make a mess,” he murmured, grinning, turning his face against Hannibal’s cheek to kiss sloppily over it. “You hate when I’m messy, don’t you Daddy?”

“I think,” Hannibal’s breath hitched, fingers squeezing Will’s where they held together. “This is a mess Daddy will be more than happy to see.”

Will made a very contented sound, a rumble in his throat, and crossed his ankles over Hannibal’s back. “Let me make you feel good,” he whispered, tugging Hannibal’s earlobe with a laugh. “I wanna make Daddy come.”

Hannibal groaned. The folds of the skirt rustled as he rocked harder into Will, panting into his throat.

Everything was going to be ruined. Stained irreparably. Will couldn’t make himself care, when Hannibal was hot and heavy above him.

“Sweetheart,” Hannibal gasped, “Will, baby-“

He cut himself off with a low, quaking moan, spilling thick into Will while Will gasped and arched beneath him.

Hannibal slid the panties back into place when he pulled out, trapping the mess in place. He stared down at Will, wide eyed, overwhelmed. He looked worried, slightly nervous.

Because Will was more devil than delicate, he simply tilted his head and murmured, “Was I good for you, Daddy?”

Hannibal’s laugh was helpless, and he pressed it against Will’s chest. Will’s fingers came up to stroke over Hannibal’s scalp, down to the nape of his neck, over his shoulders. Rubbing and massaging gently as Hannibal caught his breath. This was new for them both. This was still a discovery process, every step precarious until they both felt grounded again.

Will didn’t know what to say so he didn’t say anything. It was hard enough for himself to parse through how this felt different to being both little and his adult self, how it was as much a fetish as innocent enjoyment.

It felt good. It felt right. It felt *safe* . And there was absolutely nothing wrong with that.

When Hannibal lifted his head again, resting his chin to Will’s sternum, Will smiled sleepily at him.

“That was really fucking good,” he said, a laugh catching the last word. He brought a hand to his face to press against his eyes then looked at Hannibal again. “That was really fucking hot, actually.”

“You were,” Hannibal sighed, resting his cheek against Will’s chest. Will hummed, scratching lightly at Hannibal’s scalp again.

“Yeah,” he sighed. “You too.”

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

"Did you want to help me with a project?" Hannibal asked, navigating the page to explore other options.

Will looked up at him, hopeful. "Can we do it now?"

"We'll have to get you changed first," Hannibal said, nodding towards the dresser.

Will huffed, though he was already climbing to his feet. "It's too hot for clothes."

"It's never too hot for you to comport yourself like a little lady," Hannibal retorted. "Panties aren't appropriate outside clothes."

Summer's here!

Chapter Notes

We felt like everyone needed a little bit of DDLG love right now <3 enjoy!

Spring was lovely, with even temperatures and just the right ratio of rainy days to blue skies.

Summer, on the other hand, came with a crippling heat and a host of other problems. Hannibal's sweet, shy little girl became a mouthy, agitated grump, prone to spontaneous tantrums and naps.

The problem was the dresses. And the socks. And how long Will's curls had gotten. Just about everything, actually. Will was used to running outside with the dogs as often as he liked, Big or Small. He was used to wearing heavy swishing fabrics he could flounce about in. Previous summers had involved a lot of napping in front of the air conditioner, but now he had things he wanted and was rapidly losing to the nauseating heat.

Hannibal did his best. He procured lightweight sundresses, t-shirts in a variety of pastels, and sandals to replace the Mary-Janes. None of it helped Will fight off the stifling heat, and they were both made all the more miserable because of it.

"I want to go play outside."

Hannibal looked up from his book. It was a sweltering day. He and Will had settled into the nursery, because it was smaller than their den and so kept cooler. Will was sprawled across the floor in nothing but a pair of frilly bloomers, his face still slightly pink from his most recent sunburn.

“No.”

Will gaped at him. Rarely did Hannibal put his foot down at all with Will, let alone without a placating word or explanation. “But I want to.”

“You don’t listen to Daddy when you play outside,” Hannibal pointed out gently. “Last time you got hurt and refused to let Daddy look at it until you’d bled on your socks. You didn’t let Daddy put on more sunscreen, and got burnt,” he tilted his head at Will’s pout. “And it’s very hot outside, little one, you get grumpy in the heat.”

“But there’s nothing to *do* inside,” Will whined, drawing his heel over the rug as he lifted his thigh and slapped it down to the floor over and over. After a moment he pushed himself up and stood, catching Hannibal’s fingers gently when he looked askance, and left the room for their bedroom.

It was rare that Will would climb into the fore when he was Little but it happened - when ideas struck that he wanted to implement immediately, or something was happening he couldn’t deal with as Daddy’s little girl. Twice he’d pulled himself out of play due to overwhelming migraines, so Hannibal’s concern wasn’t unfounded. But when Will returned he didn’t look worse for wear.

He passed Hannibal his iPad with a wink and returned to his spot on the floor with a huff of breath.

In an instant he was Little once more. Everything from his posture to his mannerisms implying that Will Graham had happily returned to the back of his own mind to relax without interruption.

Hannibal looked down at the tablet.

The page open was from a blog he’d visited before, with Will and without him, that showed DIY summer activities for younger children. The page was loaded on an image of an old hose with holes cut into the length of it, water spraying out every which way as it ran through. He looked at Will, who was back to fussily kicking the floor.

“Did you want to help me with a project?” Hannibal asked, navigating the page to explore other options.

Will looked up at him, hopeful. “Can we do it now?”

“We’ll have to get you changed first,” Hannibal said, nodding towards the dresser.

Will huffed, though he was already climbing to his feet. “It’s too hot for clothes.”

“It’s never too hot for you to comport yourself like a little lady,” Hannibal retorted. “Panties aren’t appropriate outside clothes.”

It took a bit to find an outfit they could agree on. Will outright rejected his bathing suit, suitable for an adult man, but horrifying for a little girl. Likewise, Hannibal vetoed several sundresses that would have been destroyed by mud. He’d learned in the spring that if there was a mud puddle in the yard, Will would find it.

Eventually, they managed to get Will into a sundress that was already slightly ragged from time in the yard.

“We need a swimsuit for you, sweetheart.”

Will took a breath to reply and chose to say nothing instead. He hadn’t considered swimwear, because swimwear revealed much more than dresses did. They clung, they were very gendered, and Will wasn’t sure he was up for that just yet. When he looked helplessly at Hannibal, he just smiled.

“Don’t think too hard on it, little one, just something to consider." Then he placed a ridiculously wide-brimmed sun hat over Will’s curls.

Outside, the dogs were lounging under the trees or sniffing about the underbrush. They kept the back yard neatly trimmed and mowed, and Hannibal had set up a large glass greenhouse well out of the way of the curious animals - and their little co-conspirator with opposable thumbs. It was from the shed next to that that he took the hose.

It was a huge thing, long enough to span the entire yard and further still, and he had absolutely no qualms about destroying it and buying another. He explained the plan to his little girl.

“So what I need you to do,” Hannibal said finally, “is to get the camping equipment from the shed, and bring Daddy the tent hooks and the big mallet. Then we can arrange the hose in whatever shapes you like and it won’t squirm about.”

Will nodded eagerly, curls bouncing. He liked to feel ‘helpful’ when they played, though he was often more into mischief than what he’d been instructed to do. He scurried off, and only got *slightly* distracted by all the odds and ends in the shed. Some of his fishing equipment was kept there, including older lures, and when he returned he’d jammed one into his hat, decorating it with a slightly dingy red feather.

Hannibal looked at the hat and sighed. He was a tidy person, always trying to keep Will’s things neat and presentable, but Will ran about in expensive dresses like they were Wal-Mart pajamas. Hannibal tried to encourage this, wanting Will to feel as though these things were his to love to their inevitable death, but it was always frustrating when a brand new item fell prey to Will’s machinations.

Will hesitated at the sigh, hands tugging at the hem of his dress. “It… It was pretty,” he offered.

Hannibal pulled him in to kiss his cheek. “It looks very pretty, darling, excellent choice. Now, how do you want to arrange the hose?”

They ended up pinning it down in squiggling lines, curved and shifting. Will was excited before they even cut the holes, bouncing in between the curves.

Hannibal did the cutting, Will supervised. They pointed the end of the hose out into the forest-like copse that bordered our house, so that the yard wouldn’t become a mud puddle. And then… it was time to start. Or, almost.

“Come upstairs, sweetheart, let’s get you into proper clothes for playing with the hose.”

Will’s hair was plastered sweaty to his head already, cheeks warm from the heat outside and the excitement of planning this together with his Daddy. He grabbed Hannibal’s hand and led him into the house, obediently taking off his shoes to leave them by the door.

Upstairs, Hannibal told Will to get undressed while he searched for something in the closet for him. When Will was bare, he turned to see Hannibal holding something up. It was a dress, but not quite a dress, it didn’t have the frills Will’s other dresses had and it wasn’t as poofy. It was -

“A swimsuit, Daddy?”

“Yes, little one,” Hannibal smiled, holding it out for Will to touch and take into his own hands. It was patterned with strawberries and cherries, and had a small red bow on the front. It tied behind Will’s neck to keep it up, and had a skirt that was long enough to cover his swim bottoms, keeping him at least a little covered. Tasteful but little, fun. Something for Will to enjoy himself in, something to let him be himself in, when he was little. “Do you want Daddy to help you put it on?”

Will squirmed a little, as he always did when presented with something new. It wouldn’t be the same as his swim trunks. It would fit differently, feel more feminine.

“Okay,” he finally said, lifting a leg for Hannibal to ease him into the suit.

It *did* fit differently. It held him tight, snug, but not uncomfortable. There was a lot more fabric than he was used to for swimming, but Will liked it. He liked the the swish of the skirt, the cute pattern. He liked the way Hannibal looked at him, two parts fond and one part something heated that Will wasn’t in the mood to explore just yet, but would be incredibly pleased to manipulate later.

“Okay,” he said again, bouncing up onto his toes. “No shoes, please?” Hannibal was usually a bit of a stickler for keeping Will fully-dressed outside.

“No shoes,” Hannibal agreed, nudging Will towards the stairs, “but you keep the hat.”

Will practically bolted for the yard, skidding to a stop by the first curve of the snake they’d made. He stared at Hannibal impatiently, shifting from foot to foot and tugging the brim of his hat until it sat too low on the back of his head to actually shield his face.

“Turn it on!” Will told him, grinning, bouncing on the balls of his feet. “Please?”

Hannibal smiled, watching Will succumb to his own excitement, and moved to the tap to turn the water on. It took a moment, but then the first sprays came up from the holes they’d made, then more and more, until the entire snake they’d laid out was surrounded by a mist of water, tiny rainbows catching in the light.

Will absolutely did *not* shriek in joy before running into the water. It was cold, blissfully cold, and Will jumped over the folds of the hose, spread his hands in the spray, spun on the spot, hat falling from his head onto the grass.

Drawn by the commotion, the dogs wandered over, some immediately joining in the fun while others tried to catch the water streams in their mouths for a drink. Within five minutes, five dogs and one beautiful boy were drenched and frolicking in the water. Will’s laugh was contagious, Hannibal’s lips pulling up in a smile as he watched.

More and more Will allowed himself to be Daddy’s little girl, more and more he wanted to spend time outside in his dresses, with his toys, being himself. Their seclusion helped his confidence, but it was more than that. It was the knowledge that Hannibal loved him regardless of who he woke up to any given morning. It was the freedom that came with being able to laugh loudly, make a mess, cry. It was the love he felt, the joy he saw in Hannibal’s eyes when he got to take care of Will.

There’d be a nap today, no doubt, when Will finally exhausted himself. He’d want to nap curled up with Hannibal, even though inevitably he’d shove him away in his sleep when he got too hot. And perhaps when he woke, he would be the adult Will Graham again, and they’d spend the evening discussing cases and articles.

Or perhaps he wouldn’t, and the evening would be spent smacking naughty hands away from his cutting board. Hannibal looked forward to either of them.

What he did *not* look forward to, was a lapful of very wet little girl. Hannibal had seated himself in a lawn chair, and Will threw himself gracelessly atop him with a loud ‘oof.’ The hat had been lost to the yard somewhere, and Will’s cheeks were rosy from the sun. He had mud splashed up his ankles, having somehow found the *one* grassless patch to stomp through. He was soaked through, and soaking Hannibal’s clothes as well.

And he was beaming, smile broad and bright. He looked happier than he’d been all summer, no longer weighed down by the oppressive heat.

Perhaps Hannibal would need to spend more time online, finding activities. Perhaps more water-based ones.

“Daddy,” Will said with his most charming ‘little girl’ smile. “Nancy’s calling us. She’s hungry for ice cream.”

“Is she, now,” Hannibal murmured, drawing a hand through Will’s sopping wet hair to push some curls behind his ear. He was beaming. He looked absolutely radiant. “Nancy knows best, of course, she has the best manners in this house.”

“After Daddy,” Will replied, brow raised. Hannibal laughed, a gentle and soft sound.

“After Daddy,” he agreed, cupping Will’s cheek and leaning in to kiss the other. “I suppose we could do ice cream,”

“Can we eat it outside?” Will asked, eyes wide with excitement. “And then play with the hose again?”

Hannibal pretended to think it over. There was nothing on earth that would have Hannibal bring Will back in the house when he was like this, so joyful, so alive. And he himself was now wet and muddy from his shenanigans. Perhaps he’d even join him once they’d finish eating, surprise his lovely little girl with having Daddy join in on the game.

He kissed Will’s nose and laughed when he giggled. “Wait right here for Daddy. I’ll be right back.”

The internet turned out to have a wealth of ideas, most of them involving water and the back yard. With all the time they spent outside, Hannibal was entertaining thoughts of a tire swing, since Will would be too big for most conventional swingsets, and perhaps a few more odds and ends for the yard. Will would no doubt love a sand pit, and was equally likely to find it huge and impractical.

They made ice pops from various fruits and their juices, which Will did not bother to eat neatly, knowing he’d get away with the mess and then be sent through the sprinkler to wash. They watched summer storms from the porch and had a tea party on the lawn with Nancy and a couple of Will’s stuffed toys.

The pool came in July. It was a small thing, less than two feet tall and made of a deep blue plastic. Colorful cartoon fish and corals decorated the sides. Will had been a sweet, playful little thing all day, but now he frowned down from the porch, arms folded over the bodice of his swimsuit. He looked skeptical.

“It’s tiny.”

“A larger pool requires more effort,” Hannibal explained. “By the time it was handled, the summer would be nearly over. But we can discuss it for next year, if you’d like.”

Will tilted his head. “I appreciate the thought,” he said slowly, “but I’m not sure I’ll get much use of it. I could sit in it, I guess. Maybe lounge if enough of me fits. But I don’t know how much fun a little girl can have in a few inches of water.”

It turned out, a metric shittonne.

Will would lie in it, his feet over one edge and his head over the other, just his belly and groin covered by the sun-warmed water and pretend he was floating in the ocean.

He'd narrate tales of adventure to himself and any dog who joined him in the paddle pool. He brought his bath toys out and re-enacted historical battles at sea, laughing helplessly when

Winston stole a duck and made Will chase him for twenty minutes trying to get it back.

"That's one of Themistocles' triremes!" He called, laughing when the orange dog evaded him once more and fell into a play bow by the hose-snake. Will dropped to his knees before him to catch his breath.

When he failed to rescue the fleet of ships as other dogs joined the game, Will found that simply pouring water from one plastic cup to another held him absolutely mesmerized. Who knew such basic things could keep him so utterly invested.

He had two swimsuits now, and enjoyed switching which one he played in day by day. They'd be worn through by the time summer ended but he didn't care. And neither did Hannibal.

As adults, feet in the paddling pool one evening sharing a bottle of wine, Will leaned his head against Hannibal's shoulder.

"I think it'd be worth investing in a more permanent pool."

"Do you?"

"Mm," Will took a sip of wine and narrowed his eyes at him. "Perhaps a spa as well. A sauna out by the shed."

Hannibal hummed. “A place to relax and unwind for adults.”

“We’ve built a bit of a haven here. Why not add a few more touches?”

“I shudder to think of all the trouble you and the dogs could get up to with an entire pool at your disposal.”

Will rolled his eyes. “You were never going to let me near it unsupervised anyway.”

“Of course not. You could drown.” Hannibal’s smile had a mischievous tilt to it. Will gave him a playful little shove.

Fireflies flooded the yard. Will had spent one evening capturing a jar full, one of the joys he’d had even as a real child. He watched them now, content.

Eventually, Hannibal broke the silence once more. “If you wanted to swim, we could always take a vacation.”

"Criminals don't take vacations," Will reminded him, finishing his glass and holding it out for Hannibal to refill. "When they don't sleep, I don't sleep."

"With such an attitude you'll never have time for yourself."

"I don't," Will shook his head. "Didn't. Not for years." *Not until you. Until this.*

Hannibal hummed, bringing a hand up to stroke Will's scalp soothingly when his glass was full again. As Will relaxed against him, Hannibal nuzzled his hair.

"I'd like to take you away," he admitted. "Somewhere you've never been."

"I've never been outside of the continental USA," Will said sheepishly. "So that won't be hard to do."

"The Amalfi coast, perhaps," Hannibal murmured, nosing behind Will's ear affectionately. "Lisbon. Where the ocean is warm and the sun too-bright,"

"And too many people staring at the wierdo dressed in little girls' clothing." Will added. Wincing when he realized how that sounded. "Sorry. I'm not shooting the idea point blank in the face, I'm just -"

"You've never been taken care of before," Hannibal finished for him.

“You know I haven’t.”

“And you know I would never let you come to harm.”

Will sighed, turning to tuck his face against Hannibal’s throat. “I know that. I just can’t help but hone in on worst case scenarios.”

“We needn’t play while we’re away,” Hannibal pointed out, though neither of them truly wanted that. “And there are private places we could rent. A house with a pool and a private section of beach. A boat, perhaps.”

Will wrinkled his nose. “Those are still pretty open spaces. Not like this, in the middle of nowhere.”

“We could always be more subtle in our play. Find ways to indulge our interests without making you feel exposed.”

Will looked at him but didn't ask Hannibal to elaborate. Another time perhaps, when they actually started planning a vacation, when it was more than a pipe dream.

Will had continued shaving, after the first party he and Hannibal had hosted. Partly because he genuinely liked the feeling of stubble as it grew back, and partly because it helped him when he had no chance and no time to be little fully.

He shifted now to take his feet out of the pool and drape his legs over Hannibal's thighs, careful not to get his clothes wet as he did. He nuzzled Hannibal's jaw and smiled, pressing gentle kisses to his skin as Hannibal stroked his hair and drew a possessive hand over Will's calf and up his thigh.

"Hey," Will murmured, grinning when Hannibal hummed and squeezed his ankle gently. "I love you."

Hannibal's answer was to press a lingering kiss to Will's hair, intimate and loving, and slide his arm down to rest over Will's shoulders.

"Tell me what it's like," Will said after a while. "What's it like for you when you're Daddy?"

He'd asked before. He just loved the answer.

“I’m overwhelmed by my affection for you at all times,” Hannibal said, squeezing Will’s thigh, “but there is a certain warmth when I’m able to care for you.”

Will closed his eyes, letting Hannibal’s words wash over him.

“You depend on me to look after you, to keep you safe. I can lose myself in you. Much like you do, I can stop being myself, for a little while. Our lives are complicated and difficult. Together, we can have things be simple. Nothing exists in our world but the two of us, and the love we share for each other.”

“Sap.” Will’s face had broken out into a grin. He felt Hannibal press a kiss to his brow.

“You prefer me that way.”

“One of us should know how to express themselves.”

“Should I be doing more play therapy with my little girl?”

Will straightened up to glare at him. “Don’t you dare.”

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

> *“Is it ever,” Will paused, sucking the taste of coffee from his bottom lip before setting the cup down with a hum. “Does it ever get… indecent?”*
>
> *Hannibal laughed. “Certain pairs do have a sexual dynamic as we do, yes, and once in a while a party is meant for such a purpose.” He looked at Will and tilted his head. “What’s on your mind, Will?”*
>
> Will wants another Daddy party... and he wants to play. Public spanking, anyone?

Chapter Notes

> This chapter contains HEAVY sexual implication in little space and sexual content (partially in and partially out of little space) everything is entirely consensual between adults.

“Are you ready?” Hannibal murmured in Will’s ear. Will had curled up in his lap, pretty new dress bunched up as he tried to get comfortable.

“They’re going to stare,” He whispered.

“They are.” Hannibal’s hand warmed his thigh through the fabric, too high to be decent. “They’re all going to get their fill of admiring my pretty little girl.”

Will whimpered, squirming in his lap. He didn’t think he could *ever* be ready for this, but he could already hear cars coming up the drive.

“Go play with your toys, sweetheart.” Hannibal gave him a tight hug and a lingering kiss over his jaw. “I’ll let everyone in and get them settled with some wine.”

Will left on shaking limbs, tucking himself in at the coffee table with his blocks.

In truth, it had been Will’s idea.

After the first party and its aftermath, Will had approached Hannibal about pushing their play a little further.

“You said they all had their own littles?” Will had asked over coffee one morning. Hannibal nodded.

“Yes. A group of like-minded individuals who understand the dynamic and the pleasure both parties get from it.”

“So you’ve gone to these kinds of things before?”

“Once in a while another will host,” Hannibal replied, cutting into his breakfast. “Once in a while more than one little will be there with their Daddy enjoying the attention and company.”

“Is it ever,” Will paused, sucking the taste of coffee from his bottom lip before setting the cup down with a hum. “Does it ever get… indecent?”

Hannibal laughed. “Certain pairs do have a sexual dynamic as we do, yes, and once in a while a party is meant for such a purpose.” He looked at Will and tilted his head. “What’s on your mind, Will?”

Now, Will carefully built a throne out of his blocks for Nancy to sit in and waited for people to come in. Hannibal had invited the same company as before, though some had not managed to attend this evening, and others that had not come the first time were taking their place. No other littles, just Will as the center of attention again.

He squirmed his thighs together, stockings shifting against his thighs and cock half-hard in his panties. He’d asked for this. He’d planned it with Hannibal entirely. He knew he could call it quits at any moment, but the anticipation was *delicious* . The thought of what was to come was coiling in his belly in the most pleasant way.

The men mingled, voices sweetened with wine and amusement. Will had asked Hannibal not to tell them their exact plans, to leave their reactions genuine, but their pleasure in attending was still palpable.

Several of the men came to greet Will, some familiar and others not. They called him ‘pretty thing’ and ‘little lady,’ and Will squirmed with embarrassed pleasure when one tugged gently at a carefully styled curl.

Eventually, conversation drifted to dinner, and the men drifted to the dining room, and Will was left at the coffee table with his own plate.

He took a few bites of pork, too nervous to swallow much. It was time.

“Daddy!” He called. Hannibal’s head poked out from the dining room.

“Yes, sweetheart?”

“I need more juice, please.”

Hannibal’s eyes narrowed at Will and offered a smile that Will nervously returned. “Alright little one, just a moment.”

Hannibal took his time in the kitchen, and ruffled Will's hair gently as he set the glass to a coaster for him. Will mumbled his thanks and took the glass up, taking just a sip before putting it aside again. His entire body was giddy with nerves and he felt like he was either going to laugh or cry if he didn't find a way to get rid of this excess energy.

He waited a beat before calling for Hannibal again.

"What is it?"

"I don't wanna eat the beans."

"You have to eat the beans, baby, you know vegetables are good for you."

"Cut em up for me?" Will whined. "They're icky."

Hannibal lingered in the doorway before making his way over. He bent, didn't crouch, over Will as he sliced up the beans they both knew Will wouldn't be able to eat until after this was all over, and kissed his temple before straightening back up.

"Eat your dinner, sweetheart, let Daddy enjoy his adult conversations with his friends."

Will counted seconds, his hands trembling. A minute, two, and he called again.

Hannibal stuck his head out for only a moment, just long enough to give Will a chillingly stern glare. "That's enough, little one. Finish your dinner."

And then he was gone, and the conversation resumed. Will swallowed around a lump in his throat.

"Daddy!"

No answer.

" *Daddy!* "

Silence.

Will huffed, though there was no one around to perform for. He marched towards the dining room, steps muted without his shoes. It meant he snuck up on the dining room, even with his mock-frustrated stomping.

"Daddy, I'm *talking* to you."

Whatever conversation had been going on during the meal stopped, all eyes on Will as he stood in the doorway in his party dress and his hands on his hips. He could feel his cheeks flooding with heat already, did his very best not to look at the other men there. He looked only at Hannibal, and felt his stomach drop in the most welcome, terrifying way, when his eyes narrowed a flicker.

“Young lady, it is very rude to interrupt adults when they’re speaking,” Hannibal said, tone low, voice entirely without expression. Will wanted to run. He dropped his hands from his hips instead. “Daddy told you to finish your dinner. Did you?”

Will swallowed, shifted his body back and forth to watch the skirt move with a hush against his legs. “No, Daddy.”

“No. And Daddy told you not to interrupt his conversations, didn’t he?”

Will swallowed, and tucked his chin in a tiniest of nods.

“Use your words, little one, Daddy is talking to you.”

“Yes, Daddy, you told me not to interrupt,” Will replied softly. He brought his hands back behind himself and fiddled with one of the bows sewn into the lace. He pressed his thighs together under the skirt, squirming in anticipation. Will lifted his eyes for just a moment and caught the looks he was getting.

They were hungry for him. They thought him beautiful, enticing. It was a table full of men who wanted nothing more than to see Will debased, and his breath caught in his throat.

“These gentlemen came here to have a nice dinner and converse like adults,” Hannibal said, rising from his chair. “And instead they’ve been greeted by a naughty little girl having a temper tantrum.”

The words went right through Will, his cock thickening in his panties. When he was a little girl with no hungers whatsoever, he was disobedient, but when he was going to get *fucked* , he was naughty, and his body knew to respond. He shifted from foot to foot, biting his lip. “I’m sorry, Daddy.”

“It’s not me you should apologize to.” Hannibal’s hand wrapped around his bicep, guiding him to the head of the table. “Apologize to the nice gentlemen.”

Will ducked his head, cheeks blazing. “I’m sorry,” he mumbled. Turning back to Hannibal, he pouted up at him. “Can I go back to eating, now? I’ll be good.”

“I don’t think so,” Hannibal said, turning him to face the group once more. “What happens to naughty little girls in this household?”

Will’s lips parted and he shook his head, eyes on Hannibal pleading and wide.

“No, Daddy, I’ll be good I promise!”

“Daddy asked you a question, little one.” Hannibal repeated, tone brooking no argument, and Will fought everything he had not to moan. Instead he fussed and squirmed a little before answering.

“They get punished,” he said.

“How do they get punished?”

“With a spanking,” Will whispered, eyes up to scan the faces at the table again. “Over Daddy’s knee.”

“That’s right,” Hannibal let Will go a moment, knowing he wouldn’t try to get away, and pulled his chair out farther back into the room, and turning it to the side, before taking a seat. “Come here.”

Will’s breathing hitched and he bit his lip hard, hands curling in the fabric of his skirt. “Daddy,” he tried. “Can… can we do it in another room?”

“No, I think right here is the perfect place.” Hannibal said, patting his lap. “So that Daddy’s friends can see how sorry you really are for being so naughty. Come here, little one, don’t make Daddy come and get you.”

Will whimpered and shuffled over, standing at Hannibal’s side. When Hannibal met his eye there was a warmth there that radiated to Will’s bones, and he offered a nervous grin before setting his hands to Hannibal’s thigh. Hannibal caught the back of his neck and bent Will over properly, catching his kicking stockinged feet with one leg to stop him struggling as he lifted his skirt.

“Daddy, I’m sorry!”

“So you say,” Hannibal replied, reaching to hook his thumb in the waistband of Will’s panties, delighting in the squeak of distress. Will’s hand reached back to try and cover himself.

“Daddy, no! Not my panties, please!”

“Punishment is a bare bottom spanking over Daddy’s knee,” Hannibal reminded him, “you know this. Now be a good girl and take your punishment, or else Daddy will have to give you another.”

Will barely managed to turn a moan of pleasure into one of humiliation, as Hannibal shuffled his panties down to his knees. Like this, he could see nothing, but every man at the table could see Will’s upturned ass, still slightly pink from a previous game.

“How red do you make her, Hannibal?” Someone asked. Will pushed up onto his toes, unable to kick out with the way Hannibal held up.

“She’s such a delicate little thing,” Hannibal mused, rubbing a hand over Will’s backside, “It’s *usually* just ten. But then, she’s usually much less spoiled.”

Will let out a short huff of breath. He did often feel delicate with Hannibal, but right now, he floated in an in-between space, on tenterhooks as Hannibal kept him tense.

“Count them for me, sweetheart,” Hannibal said, bringing his hand down.

“I-one,” Will moaned, wrapping an arm around Hannibal’s leg.

“Louder. Nice and clear so the gentlemen can hear you.”

Will whined, helpless and very, very hard. He kept his thighs pressed tight together to at least keep that from wandering eyes, though he was certain Hannibal would make sure he couldn't do even that soon enough.

"One, Daddy,"

"Just like that." Hannibal hit him again.

Will counted, humiliated and painfully turned on, feeling his voice slip higher and higher with every deliberate smack of Hannibal's palm. He didn't hit him hard, he rarely did when Will was little, and Will had asked, when they'd been planning this, for it to be a spanking like always.

But just in front of someone else.

"Nine, Daddy," Will whimpered, panting in the dark safe warmth of his skirt. At the last, Will squeaked and tried to tuck his legs up, toes spread in his white socks. "T-ten, Daddy! I'm sorry!"

Hannibal hummed, rubbing his palm over Will's warm pink skin as he looked up at the table. All eyes were trained on Will's trembling bottom, on his balls, caught softly between his thighs, on the panties that wrinkled up against his skin. Absolutely debauched, lovely thing. Hannibal shifted just enough for Will to feel how this was affecting him, and dropped his free hand down, out of sight, to find one of Will's and squeeze.

Will squeezed back.

"Can I get up now, Daddy?"

"I don't know," Hannibal mused, pinching Will's skin gently. "You've been very, very disruptive today."

"I have my little one over the back of a chair," one of the men commented. "When he's very bad he knows Daddy will use the belt until it hurts to sit down."

Will's breath caught and he rutted up against Hannibal. To anyone else it would look like another attempt at a struggle, just as it should. Hannibal caught him, held him still again.

"You know, little one, I think that might be a good idea. A proper punishment for such misbehavior."

"No, Daddy, please!" Will gasped. He flailed over Hannibal's lap, the barest hint of a struggle.

"I don't think I'll be able to get her over a chair," Hannibal said regretfully, "not with what a naughty thing she's being. I suppose someone will have to loan me a belt."

Will whimpered, his cock leaking against Hannibal. His voice pitched high in a whine. "Daddy, *please* ."

“Settle,” Hannibal snapped, pinching Will’s thigh, threateningly close to his balls. Will heard a snap of leather as someone handed Hannibal a belt, and he drew in a shocked, shuddering breath.

They were going to do this. They were *actually* doing this, the sort of punishment that could make Will come all over himself, in front of people.

“Do you have something to say to me, little girl?” A line in the scene, yes, but also the chance to safeword, to step back.

Will didn’t want to.

“I’m sorry, Daddy!” He yelped, crying out when the belt cracked against his ass.

“Oww oww oww! Daddy, stop!” Will’s cheeks were aflame, he was dizzy with how hard he was, and the soft sounds that filtered through the cave of his skirts had him squirming. There was laughter, soft and amused, quiet conversation, hums of pleasure… and then Hannibal struck him again and Will affected a sob. He didn’t have to try too hard with that.

“Be still, naughty thing, you have three more to take.”

Three more.

Much, *much* less than what Will could take when he and Hannibal played as adults, and nowhere near close enough to actually hurt him, but Will was tangled in littlespace and his own head, and the pain magnified. And the humiliation, being so exposed, in such a way, to people who loved and got off on the same things he and Hannibal did…

The third smack had Will kicking his feet helplessly against the floor, one hand squeezing around Hannibal’s ankle to ground himself. He was leaking over Hannibal’s pants, they would *see* when Hannibal made Will stand up again and pulled his panties back on. They would see and they would know, and *oh* just the thought -

“Daddy!” Will’s squeal was breathless, needy. “Daddy please stop!”

“Just one more, sweetheart, here it comes.”

Will pushed his toes to the floor and arched his back, offering his bottom in a way that was entirely Hannibal’s insatiable boyfriend, and not Daddy’s little girl, and he didn’t care.

The belt caught his thighs, hard enough to have him wailing. He collapsed over Hannibal’s lap in a sobbing heap, only partially faked. He was so hard it hurt, his balls drawn up tight and no doubt the center of attention between reddened thighs. “Please,” he begged, as a warm hand rubbed his back.

“All done, sweetheart,” Hannibal said, his fingers sliding down a touch more than was appropriate. Will squirmed, gasping for breath. He didn’t want to be done.

But Hannibal slid his panties back up, cupping Will’s aching cock as he adjusted them. He pulled Will to his feet and straightened his dress out.

“Go to your room,” Hannibal told him, “I’ll be up to speak with you once I’ve seen the guests out.”

Will went, though he of course went to the master and not the nursery. He was a haze of pain and pleasure, sprawling out on his stomach and rutting himself against the bed, sliding a hand between his thighs to feel his arousal through layers of soft fabric. That was how Hannibal found him, moaning and writhing and so very eager.

"Beautiful, terrible thing," Hannibal praised, stepping up to the side of the bed and stroking Will's hair from his face. He crouched, kissing Will's cheek as Will grinned and tried to turn away in a semblance of the sweetest shyness.

"I'm so hard," Will whispered, arching his back to rock a little harder against his hand, squirming when Hannibal stopped him and pushed his skirt up over his thighs again. "I thought I was going to come right there in front of everyone."

"I'm not sure I'm ready for them to see that side of you just yet," Hannibal admitted, sliding into bed behind Will and hitching his hips up. He pulled his panties down just enough and spread Will with both hands before licking slowly over his entrance. Will shoved his face into the pillows and moaned, trying to spread his legs and arch back against Hannibal.

"Fuck, Hannibal, oh fuck,"

Hannibal said nothing, just moaned against Will's skin and thrust his tongue into him. He could smell how close Will was, smelled it at dinner when he'd spanked Will in front of a room full of men, essentially strangers to him.

Brave, remarkable boy, Hannibal was addicted to him.

Will whimpered and bit down as his orgasm overtook him, wetting his panties and making his muscles go weak as Hannibal continued to eat him out, chasing his own pleasure with slow undulations against the sheets.

“Hannibal,” Will whined, trembling as he was pushed past the point of relief, into the hazy, needy place where everything overwhelmed him. “Hannibal, Daddy, *please.”*

Hannibal hauled himself up over Will, undoing his slacks just enough to fist himself roughly. He came in spurts over Will’s reddened backside, groaning at the sweet noises Will made as he was covered.

They were both quiet after, each trying to catch their breath. Hannibal sprawled next to Will, one arm thrown over his waist, the most he could manage after such an intense loss of energy.

“Love you,” Will mumbled. Hannibal answered him with sleepy kisses to his temple.

“Love you too.”

“I’m not ready yet either,” Will whispered, turning his head so his hazy blue eyes met Hannibal’s brown. “But maybe soon?”

A surge of warmth rekindled in Hannibal's belly. "Soon," he agreed.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

By the weekend, Will could feel a scream building at the back of his throat.

Real life happens, and our beautiful pair spend time putting each other back together.

It was Hannibal who had pointed Will towards Tobias Budge (“it borders on a violation of Doctor-patient confidentiality,” he’d said hesitantly, “but they seem so worried, and as long as I tell you nothing about my *patient* …” and then he’d fussed over the definition of “preventing harm” for a few long moments before the words had finally tumbled from his lips), and it was Hannibal Will thought of while his ears were still ringing.

Budge had defended himself well. Will’s hands were still bleeding from the piano wire, and now he was out in the world, and the only connection Will knew of was Hannibal’s patient.

There were already mobs of emergency response vehicles at Hannibal's office by the time Will made it there, stumbling from the car with wide-eyed panic. He’d waited too long ensuring the cops made it to Budge’s shop, he’d spent too long being interviewed, he’d *dallied* and there’d been no one to protect Hannibal.

But Hannibal was fine. Will pushed past cops and Jack Crawford himself and found Hannibal seated at his desk, bloodied, bruised, but alive. Will made a sound, choked and high, a strangled cry in the back of his throat, and Hannibal looked up at him.

Hannibal seemed to cross the room in the blink of an eye. One moment, he was being tended to by an EMT, the next, he was crushing Will painfully to his chest, his breathing ragged.

“I thought. I thought he’d *killed* you,” Hannibal gasped.

"I thought he'd killed *you,"* Will replied, a whine catching his words at the end. He clung to Hannibal's usually impeccable suit with his damaged hands and didn't want to let him go. He didn't care who saw, his colleagues knew he was in a relationship, and Hannibal hadn't been his psychiatrist for months.

He clung and breathed Hannibal in and felt his heart beating fast and alive behind his ribs. He didn't know how long they stood together, swaying with exhaustion and adrenaline, until someone gently touched Will's shoulder and jerked him back into reality.

"I want your report in my inbox by Monday," Jack told him quietly. Will blinked.

"But it's… Wednesday today."

Jack gave him a look, squeezed his shoulder a little.

"Monday," he repeated. "Get some rest."

It only hit Will then just how exhausted he was. Hannibal looked similarly shellshocked. Neither were in any position to drive just then, so arrangements were made for them to take a cab home and collect Hannibal's Bentley and Will's truck later.

Later.

Not now. Certainly not now when they needed each other, and their dogs, and their home to bring them back to themselves.

The dogs were subdued when they arrived, no doubt sensing the stress and fear radiating from them both. Hannibal went immediately for the first aid kit while Will went for the whiskey. He poured himself a generous glass and splashed out a bit of Hannibal's favorite wine as well, offering it up when Hannibal joined him.

"I'm fine," Will insisted, when Hannibal ignored the wine in favor of pulling Will free of his button down and undershirt. "EMTs already bandaged me up."

"Not properly," Hannibal said, his mouth set in a thin, flat line. He undid Will's bandages with careful hands, brow growing more and more furrowed as he revealed the slices Budge had left.

Will was certain he was as thoroughly patched up as it was possible to be, but he hopped onto the kitchen island and let Hannibal inspect his cuts, wincing as Hannibal rubbed alcohol over the damage. If it made Hannibal feel better to see to Will's wounds himself, so be it.

"I really am fine," Will assured him. Hannibal stilled for a moment, and then continued on as though Will hadn't spoken. "Hannibal. I promise, there's nothing wrong that won't heal up over a long weekend."

"He could have killed you," Hannibal replied quietly. "He could have killed you because *I* sent you to him, because *I* put you in harm's way."

"Hannibal -"

Usually steady hands were trembling as Hannibal caught one of Will's injured palms and kissed reverently against it. Will made a sound, soft and low in his throat, and gently spread his knees to welcome Hannibal closer, wrapping them around him as Hannibal leaned his weight against the island and pressed his forehead to Will's sternum.

"I could have lost you," Hannibal's voice was ragged, breathless, and wet, and Will enfolded him in an embrace that tightened with every hitch of Hannibal's breathing. He had not been thinking of his own survival when Budge had wrapped the wire around his throat. He'd been thinking of how worried Hannibal would be if he didn't come home, how upset he would be if his little girl wasn't there to wake up with him on Saturday morning. He'd fired his gun

close enough to his ear to deafen himself for hours and hours because it was the only way he knew he had a chance of coming home.

Coming back.

To Hannibal, to Daddy.

“I’m here,” he whispered, ducking his head against the crown of Hannibal’s. “I’m here, I’m not going anywhere.”

Hannibal made a terrible, aching sound, one heavy with pain. Will cupped his cheeks and kissed his forehead, his own hands trembling.

“I’m here,” he said again. “He didn’t hurt me, not anything that can’t be mended. I’m safe *because* of you.”

Hannibal scoffed. Will pushed onward, forcing Hannibal’s head up to look him in the eye.

“No, Hannibal, I’m serious. I’m here because I had something to come home to. Because I knew I had to get back to you.”

Will pressed their foreheads together, closing his eyes. “I’ve never had anything to fight for before.”

They stood a while longer that way, exhausted and upset and sore, until Will turned his face to nuzzle Hannibal’s cheek and kiss there. “Let’s go to bed,” he whispered. Hannibal just nodded.

The dogs were seen to by Will, as Hannibal saw to their laundry. Despite his meticulous routine, Hannibal did not insist on eating dinner, let alone making it. When they met again in the bedroom, Will gathered Hannibal to him and took him to bed.

They made love until both were crying, pressed painfully close, rocking slowly, pressing deep. When Hannibal came, he turned aside to bury his face in the pillows and Will let him, curling up behind him, knees tucked up against Hannibal’s, chest to his back, arms wrapped securely and safely around him.

And so they slept.

The next morning Hannibal put on an impressive show of normalcy, but Will saw right through it. He drank his coffee and accepted the breakfast Hannibal made him but he didn’t buy the smile Hannibal flashed his way or believed him when he said he’d slept fairly well. He hadn’t slept at all; neither had Will.

By early afternoon, Hannibal’s hands were shaking again.

By midafternoon, Will did something about it.

“Daddy?” He leaned in the doorway of Hannibal’s study, tugging a curl that hung over his eyes. He was still dressed in sweats and a stretched shirt, the juxtaposition was incredibly

strange. “I wanna wear the blue dress.”

Hannibal hesitated. For a moment, Will thought he would deny him, when he never had before. Then they’d *really* be sunk; Will had no idea how to force this upon Hannibal even when he so clearly needed it.

Hannibal closed the folder he’d been working on. Will hoped it hadn’t been the one belonging to the man who’d lain dead on the floor of Hannibal’s office; the last thing Hannibal needed right now was to dwell.

Hannibal looked his age when he stood, weary and overwhelmed. He stretched, cracking his back, and then held his hand out for Will.

“Come here, sweetheart.”

Will tiptoed into his arms. Hannibal hugged him fiercely, lips against Will’s temple. “You are a treasure,” Hannibal murmured against his curls. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s waist and squeezed tight.

After a few shaking breaths, Hannibal pulled back, turning Will to face the door. “Meet me in the nursery, sweet girl. I have to put some things away first.”

“Okay, Daddy,” Will gave him a smile, sweet and soft, over his shoulder before bouncing off.

Hannibal watched him go and only when Will was pounding his way up the stairs did Hannibal allow himself to drop heavily back into his hair. God, he’d needed this. He’d been aching for his little girl since the moment they got home, but Will had always been the one to dictate when he felt small, Hannibal just accommodated him when he did.

And he’d known.

Somehow, Will had known that Hannibal needed this. He hadn’t assumed he would be imposing, hadn’t thought he would be putting Hannibal out with his request to be looked after and little. He’d just appeared, Hannibal’s beautiful, sweet little girl, and called for her Daddy.

By the time Hannibal made his way up to the nursery, Will was spinning slowly in circles, hands out at his sides and eyes on his feet. He’d tossed his “big clothes” aside and was blissfully bare. There were bruises blooming dark over his ribs and throat, scratches and grazes over Will’s usually smooth skin, and Hannibal needed to cover it up, he had to get rid of the things marring his precious girl.

“The blue dress?” he asked, watching Will stop spinning and shake his head to get it clear again.

“Yeah!”

“The light one or the dark one, sweetheart?”

“Nancy’s one!”

Of course. Always the original dress, when Will felt the neediest. It was getting a little frayed at the wrists and hem now, but Will loved it so dearly that Hannibal was reluctant to bin it.

Will transformed, as Hannibal dressed him. His motions became fluid, little wiggles and happy squirming that tugged a smile at Hannibal's lips. He let Hannibal button him into long sleeves and pull lace socks all the way up his smooth thighs, until he was thoroughly covered, every bruised inch of him.

Hannibal tugged gently at a knotted curl. "You need a haircut," he said softly.

To Hannibal's surprise, Will pulled a face. Normally, Will was eager to get a few inches off and out of his eyes, but now he pouted up at Hannibal.

"But Daddy, how can I be a princess if you cut it?"

Hannibal laughed, startled. Will beamed, visibly pleased with himself.

"You'll be *my* princess, regardless," Hannibal assured him. Will pretended to think that over.

"Maybe later," he decided. "Right now, I'm busy."

"Oh?" Hannibal allowed his little girl to slip from his arms and followed Will out the door when he left the nursery and made for the master bath. From beneath the sink, Will took Hannibal's medical bag and a box of plasters.

"Daddy,"

Hannibal's lips twitched in a smile. "Yes, sweetheart?"

"I'm gonna make you better."

Hannibal tilted his head, watched as Will made his way closer and looked up at him with wide, innocent eyes. As though he truly were waist-height for Hannibal, and not mere inches off from equalling him. He reached to cup Will's face and his smile widened.

"Are you a doctor today, sweet girl?"

"Yeah!" Will grinned, bouncing on the balls of his feet. "I'm Doctor Princess! And you need to be patched up. Along with Teddy. Get Teddy, please, Daddy, he can wait in the waiting room while I help you first."

Hannibal obediently gathered Will's teddy from where he sat on Will's bookcase in the nursery and put him in front of Will's small play table, offering him a picture book to read while he waited. Will nodded, decisive and pleased, and tugged Hannibal's sleeve to bring him down to the ground too.

Will knelt in front of him and reached to gently, childishly, check Hannibal's eyes, got him to open his mouth and say *aaaaah* like he'd seen in the movies so often. He pressed his palm to Hannibal's forehead and nodded, expression serious.

“I think I can help.” he promised.

“I think you can, too,” Hannibal whispered back, vulnerable in his honesty.

He sat cross legged on the fluffy rug, while Will inspected him with careful hands. He did not undo the bandages that already held Hannibal together, but he added a handful of new ones that had been chosen specifically for Will: bright pink, or with stars painted across them.

When he’d finished adding a purple band aid to Hannibal’s arm, high up under his sleeve, Will leaned in against his shoulder. He slid his hand beneath Hannibal’s shirt, pushing up until he could let it rest against the thump of Hannibal’s heart.

“Too fast,” he said disapprovingly.

“I’m afraid I can’t help that, princess.”

“ *Doctor* Princess,” Will corrected playfully. “And it’s okay. You just need a prescription.”

“And what is my doctor prescribing?”

“Cuddles,” Will said softly. “And the special ice cream from the back of the freezer.”

“Is it bad enough for the special ice cream, then?” Hannibal asked quietly. Will nodded sagely. Hannibal sighed, pretending to look grave. “I’ll defer to my experienced physician.”

“Good.”

Then Will freed his hand and crawled into Hannibal’s lap, making himself small, wrapping his arms around Hannibal’s shoulders and pressing his nose against his neck. He breathed him in, the familiar, warm, exhausted smell of Daddy, of Hannibal, of the man he’d built a life with, and rested his full weight on him, letting Hannibal hold him close and take what he needed.

And he needed this.

Will could see, sometimes, even when Hannibal was genuinely happy, how desperately he needed his little girl. He could sense when Hannibal pulled him close, when he took particular care with Will’s hair, when he shaved his legs and his face and buttoned up Will’s intricate dresses, just how much this meant to him. Will had wondered for a long time if Hannibal would grow bored and stop this play, if he would find he got nothing out of it. But he never had. In fact, he seemed to find it as therapeutic as Will did.

And now, holding his little girl, Hannibal’s breath hitched quietly and he allowed himself to cry.

Hands petted over Will’s curls, down his back, curled protectively around him as Hannibal rocked them gently and silently cried against Will’s shoulder. Tension built up before it eased, and Will held his breath as Hannibal hugged him tight enough to almost crush his ribs, to almost hurt, before relaxing, sighing out his pain, sniffing as he brought a hand up to wipe his eyes.

Will pulled back, reaching with clumsy fingers to wipe his tears instead.

“I’m sorry, sweetheart.” Hannibal told him, smiling.

“It’s brave to cry,” Will replied, kissing his cheek. “And after a cry it’s a good time to take a nap.”

“I thought we were meant to be having ice cream?”

Will faltered, deep enough into his own behaviors to waver. Then he shook his head. “Ice cream can wait.”

Hannibal rubbed at his face again, wiping distress and exhaustion away. “It must be a serious diagnosis, for my little one to give up ice cream.”

Will wriggled a bit, until they were eye to eye. “We could lay in the pink bed,” he said, voice coaxing. He could count on two hands the number of times he’d napped in the nursery, on one, the times Hannibal had joined him. “We could undo the curtains and turn on the twinkly lights.”

Hannibal laughed and kissed Will’s cheek, easing the boy from his lap. “You’re trying to bribe me.”

Will nodded with a small smile. “Is it working?”

“It is.” Hannibal had worked hard to put together the perfect nursery, and it got used rarely enough for him to feel a twinge of pride whenever Will chose it. “Should we wear pajamas?”

Will shook his head. “It’s serious enough not to.”

Hannibal laughed, but didn’t contradict him. It was serious enough, indeed, when his little girl had to take care of Daddy instead of the way things should have been.

By the weekend, Will could feel a scream building at the back of his throat.

He and Hannibal had slowly put themselves back together after the incident in their own way. After Will had helped Hannibal cry, they’d napped, Will had been given a bath, and they had dessert for dinner.

The next day, Will had spent a lot of time napping on Hannibal’s couch as he worked in his study, curled up small with Nancy in his arms and his head in Hannibal’s lap.

Today he’d gone out for a few hours to walk the dogs, and coming back felt less put together than he had in an age. He hated feeling this way, he’d almost forgotten the feeling, with how being little helped put his mind at ease, and now it was back. It was back and it was choking him.

Will knew, he knew that if he went to Hannibal and asked, he would help. He knew that.

But something ached for that scream to fulfill itself, to break free and *force* Hannibal's hand. Like a tantrum. But there was nothing he could do, not anything at all, to get into his little headspace. It felt like Will was thudding his fists against a locked door and getting silence in answer. He couldn't drop. He hadn't been able to since morning.

It made him snippy and unpleasant, he knew. Hannibal had taken to staring at him, eyes too knowing, too all-seeing.

Stress had not entirely left them. They both slept roughly. Will dreamed of wires against his throat.

And yet the one thing that would help, Will couldn't do. He could playact it for Hannibal's sake, and gladly, but he couldn't undo his own tension and how tightly it bound his emotions into knots.

Hannibal's hand against his back was a brand. Will batted it away, eyes narrowed.

"I thought we might have a moment of rest, before lunch," Hannibal suggested, looking not at all offended.

"Go nap, if you're tired," Will said. He wanted to go too. He wanted to sink down into sleep and wake up a Princess, happy and playful, but exhaustion clawed at him too much to sleep.

"No, I think it's time I put you down for yours instead," Hannibal told him. Will bristled. He could feel it, the tantrum, the tantrum that wasn't a tantrum because he wasn't small, and when he was an adult they weren't tantrums they were goddamn unwelcome panic attacks and he didn't *need* this shit right now he didn't *need it.*

"Fuck off," Will whispered, hating how it sounded, immediately shooting an apologetic wide-eyed look at Hannibal, who still looked so calm, so collected, so unoffended. And that made it worse, because he wasn't fighting back, he wasn't telling Will he was sick of his attitude and he wanted him and his messy fucking mutts out of the house. "Fuck *off,* Hannibal, don't baby me."

"You're exhausted."

"I'm fucking fine!"

"Language,"

"Fuck you!" Will yelled. His throat hurt, his eyes stung, his body shook and he hated it, he hated himself for this, he hated how much he was hurting Hannibal, even if he wasn't showing it, he -

Hannibal caught his arm before Will could pull it free and tugged him over to the bed, gently unbalancing Will with a foot against one of Will's own so he bounced down onto it. Then he set a knee to the small of Will's back and slid a hand into his hair.

"You're allowed to ask for help, Will," he told him softly. "Let me help you."

Will struggled beneath Hannibal's weight, letting out a growl as if he was one of the dogs. "I don't need your help! I'm *fine!"*

"You aren't," Hannibal said, effortlessly pinning Will's wrists against the small of his back. "But that's alright. I know what you need."

How could he, when Will himself didn't know? When Will could only think of vague flashes of sensation, a relief he didn't know how to find. "Get off me! Get off, get *off* !"

Hannibal reached beneath him to undo his belt one-handed, and then tugged Will's slacks and briefs down to his knees in one go. Will shrieked in outrage, kicking uselessly. His legs were trapped, bound at the knee, and all his kicking did was remind Will that Hannibal was just *bigger* than him, just enough to pin him in place.

"It's alright," Hannibal told him, rubbing his hand gently over Will's ass. "I've got you. It's safe to let go."

"Fuck *off!"*

The first slap was barely felt, and that made Will even angrier. When Hannibal beat him he beat hard, he left welts on Will's legs, he left bruises on his skin. This? This was pathetic. It wasn't a spanking, it was a goddamn caress, and that was the last thing Will needed.

His voice pulled loudly from him again and he continued to struggle, as Hannibal started up a comfortably quick rhythm with his spanking. Once in a while, a deliberately hard whack would come through and Will's voice would hitch, would stop him in his tirade of swearing and anguish.

"I *hate you!"* Will howled. "I hate this! All of this! These fucking *games,* this bullshit we're pretending matters! It doesn't matter, it doesn't *fucking* matter! Let me *go* Hannibal!"

"You matter," Hannibal promised him. His swats grew harder, but never rough. Never violent, never as much as Will could take.

Never more than Will could take from his Daddy.

"You matter so much to me," Hannibal said.

"I don't!" Will shrieked. "I don't, I *hate* you. Stop saying it!"

"You do," Hannibal promised. He swatted sharply at Will's thighs and Will shrieked, his whole body tensing, toes to the ends of his hair, every muscle taught.

"Stop saying that!" He wailed, and then everything *snapped* , a brittle rubber band falling to pieces. He sobbed, his body going limp against the bed, shaking with the force of his cries. He hated everything, and he didn't, and he wanted Hannibal to stop except if Hannibal ever, ever stopped, Will would never forgive him.

Hannibal did stop, eventually, but not until Will's cries faded to little hiccups, until his backside was red and burning and everything felt just a little bit *more.*

“My sweet baby,” Hannibal said. “You matter more than anything, no matter how big or small you feel. You can have whatever you need. You don’t need to force me, I want to give it to you.”

Will cried a little bit harder, hiding his red and wet face against the bedding.

Hannibal sat on the bed and gathered Will to him, letting him cling and press his teary, snotty face to his shirt as Will kicked his pants and underwear away. They sat together for what felt like a lifetime, before Will’s hiccups slowed and his breathing eased. Hannibal continued to touch him, to stroke his hair, to hold him close.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Will whispered, voice raspy from his screaming. “I’m sorry, Daddy, I didn’t mean it, I didn’t mean any of it.”

“I know, sweetheart,” Hannibal told him, kissing his fevered brow. “I know, my darling, it’s alright.”

“It just felt -”

Hannibal hushed him, still rocking him gently, until Will started to fuss and pulled away, smearing tears across his cheeks. He frowned and pouted, tugging at his shirt helplessly until Hannibal caught his hands gently and kissed his knuckles.

“Let’s get you changed, little one. Let’s get you into a nightie and down for a nap.”

“Okay,” Will breathed. He leaned in and wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s neck, tight enough to hurt, before letting him go with a sniff.

It had been so hard to sink, so hard to let go, but now he felt as though he was floating. His eyelids were heavy and his head was fuzzy, as Hannibal undid every button and eased him free of his flannel shirt.

“Arms up.”

The nightgowns always felt so soft against his skin. Will didn’t always feel like dressing like a six year old girl, but he was beginning to hate pants. What was the point to pants, when skirts and dresses did the same job in nicer fabrics?

This nightgown was silk, with just a bit of scalloped lacing around the chest, and it swished about his thighs when he stood up. He gave his hips an extra little twist just to feel the fabric and how cool and pleasant it was. Then he rubbed at his eyes and let Hannibal tuck him against his chest.

“Here, or the nursery?”

“Nurs’ry,” Will mumbled sleepily. Better they both get something out of it. “With Daddy, please.”

"Of course sweetheart," Hannibal kissed his hair, running soothing hands up and down Will's back until he was sleepily falling against him, too heavy to hold himself up.

So Hannibal ducked to gather Will up in a bridal carry, hushing him when he tried to protest. The nursery wasn't far, and in that moment Hannibal hardly cared; he would have carried him around the entire house if it helped soothe him.

He lay Will down in the bed first, moving to turn on the nightlight and to close the curtains to give them a semblance of darkness for a while. He smiled when Buster trotted up to him, tilting his head curiously. The dogs had cared little for how Will dressed as long as they still spent time together. Hannibal gestured with his chin and the little dog leapt into bed with his master.

Will mumbled something to him, childish nonsense or actual words, it hardly mattered, as Hannibal undressed enough to comfortably sleep a few hours. One of the other dogs had followed Buster upstairs and was making herself comfortable digging a nest at Will's feet.

By the time Hannibal climbed in behind Will and let the sheer curtains fall closed around them, Will was half awake and curled up small. He'd pulled Buster close, as though he were a toy, and buried his face in his fur. Hannibal spooned him, mimicking the position and breathing in the smell of Will's messy hair before sighing out.

They'd nap, then they'd get up and decide what to do together. As they always did, as they always would.

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

“I was just wondering…”

Hannibal gave him that searching look he was so good at. Finally, he asked, “Would you like to meet him?”

Will meets the dressmaker!

“Where do you get them?” Will asked.

Hannibal looked up from his tablet to see Will gently touching the dresses in the nursery closet. They’d come in here to measure the wall for a new bookcase and dresser before Will had gotten distracted.

He wasn’t little, he was still Will Graham, but the fascination he wore on his face when he looked at the dresses was exactly the same as the look he had when he saw them as Daddy’s little girl.

“I have my sources,” Hannibal replied. Will snorted, turning to look at him.

“You know a guy who knows a guy, right?” He joked. “Come on, it’s not like I can buy them myself. I like when you gift me things. But they’re so elaborate, they can’t be off the rack.”

“They’re custom,” Hannibal allowed, stepping closer to Will and tucking a curl behind his ear as they both regarded the closet. It was overflowing with summer dresses, fluffy skirts, ribbons, frills, lace and velvet. Will had more dresses than anyone could wear in a lifetime, and he had worn every single one of them at least twice.

“Bespoke,” he added, smiling when Will gave him a look. “The man who makes them is very selective about his clientele.”

“Yeah I can see why,” Will said. “If he had to make these commercially he’d go mad.”

“He’s particular about his tastes,” Hannibal said. “I can make requests about fabric, colors, but the final choices I leave up to him.

Will looked from one end of the closet to the other. From his very first simple dress, to the puffs and lace of his special party dresses. A variety of choices, so many different things.

“Is it all Victorian? It can’t be that common.”

“He has a few other customers interested in Lolita fashion,” Hannibal said, gently pulling Will free of the closet. “You aren’t as unusual as you feel.”

“I don’t feel unusual,” Will fibbed, blushing faintly. “Not anymore.” Mostly, anyway.

“Did you have a problem with one of your dresses, Will?”

Will shook his head, biting his lip. “I was just wondering…”

Hannibal gave him that searching look he was so good at. Finally, he asked, “Would you like to meet him?”

Here, Will didn’t answer in words. He didn’t know how. On the one hand, he did want to meet the man who seemed to understand Will’s needs so beautifully that everything he made him felt perfect. On the other, he couldn’t imagine a more terrifying experience than meeting someone who - until then - wouldn’t know Will from Adam.

In the end, Will nodded, helpless to his own imaginings and wants. He leaned into Hannibal when he reached out to guide Will against him, and sighed. Yeah, he wanted to meet him. It would be just another step, another validation for who Will was.

They didn’t talk about it much more after that. Will shook himself out of his reverie and returned to reading out measurements to Hannibal for him to get down. After, they spent a good while choosing new furniture for the nursery before taking the dogs out for a long walk. The next day, Will was little, and had seemingly forgotten about asking to meet the man who made his gowns. Hannibal didn’t push, he never did.

So, inevitably, it was Will who brought it up again.

“I’ve been in touch with him,” Hannibal replied with a smile. “He said he would be more than happy to meet the little girl who wears his best work.”

Will blushed furiously, swallowing. “He… he wants to meet -”

“He wants to meet you,” Hannibal assured him. “However you would like to present yourself when he does.”

Will squirmed. “I can’t go out in my dresses,” he pointed out.

“We can bring one,” Hannibal said. “Or he can come here.”

“Come *here* ?” Will squeaked. Here, where there was always some toy left forgotten in the main rooms, where the nursery door stood open unless they had guests, where signs of Hannibal’s little girl pervaded every room.

“He’s expressed interest in your nursery. I think he’d like to branch out to bed curtains.”

Will gaped at Hannibal. Every time he thought he couldn’t be surprised anymore, Hannibal threw something new at him. “I… Okay?” He squeaked.

The man came three days later. Will hid in the bedroom closet, a moment of childish panic, his face buried in his skirts. This was not like the parties, where the other men's job was to praise him and then ignore him. He did not know how to be a little girl for someone else.

Will could hear Hannibal talking with him downstairs. The man had a strong British accent, a warm laugh. He sounded like someone Will could feel safe with, but the worry, the endless gnawing at the back of his mind that something could go wrong, *would* go wrong, was something he couldn't quite quell. Not yet.

So he stayed hidden. When Hannibal called for him, Will didn't reply, and Hannibal apologized gently for how shy his little girl was. The man - Anthony, Will had heard Hannibal greet him by name - brushed the apology off.

"Of course she is," he said, voice growing louder as the two of them passed the bedroom on their way to the nursery. "A strange man is about to invade her space who knows things about her she never told him. I hardly blame her the worry."

Will swallowed thickly, clinging to his skirts a moment longer before easing the closet door open and stepping out. He could hear them still talking, in the nursery now, and took a moment to gather himself.

Daddy was here, Daddy would always keep his little girl safe. And this was their house, if Will wanted to tell the man to leave, he could, and no one could say a thing about it.

The more he warmed himself with the thought, the less he wanted him to leave. So with another deep breath, Will straightened his dress - a pale plum color today - and made his way down the corridor to the nursery.

It had taken time, but Will was finally beginning to think of the nursery as *his* nursery. It felt odd to be sharing that space with anyone but Hannibal, and Will paused in the door. He wished, for a moment, that he had Nancy, but she was over on the bed, and it was a silly thought anyway. What was a porcelain doll going to do to protect him?

"There you are, sweetheart," Hannibal said. The man paused in his perusal of the closet, turning with a grin. He was dressed smartly, with tight trousers, a dark jacket, and a scarf on inside the house. Will resisted the clawing need to duck behind the door and remain unseen.

"Well, look at you," Anthony said cheerily. "Hannibal spoke of your beauty, of course, but he was stingy with pictures."

"I've told you before," Hannibal chided, "there aren't any."

"Well, there should be. You should see yourself, sweetheart."

Will brought a hand up to touch his smooth cheeks, self-conscious. His face was hot. He glanced at Hannibal, nervous. "Th-thank you?"

Anthony brushed him off. "No thanks required for honesty. Now, I brought a few swatches and my sketchbook, but I was hoping you could come over here and show me some of your

favorites. Tell me what you like about them."

Will gave Hannibal another horrified look. He couldn't speak. His words were stuck in his throat.

Hannibal nodded, encouraging and warm, and let Will approach at his own pace. Anthony didn't rush him either, seemingly content to stand back and allow Will to do as he wanted in his own space.

Will wasn't used to this, to being allowed to do what he wanted and how he wanted it with anyone else but Hannibal. It still felt a bit like a dream, that someone else was here and seeing Will like this, and not seeing just a man in a dress.

This wasn't at all like the parties, but this was almost… better. And much scarier.

"I like all the dresses," Will started carefully, stepping up to the closet to touch a few. "You make really pretty dresses,"

"Thank you darling girl. It means so much more to me coming from the sweet thing who wears them."

Not condescending, not bored. Anthony watched Will as Will watched him back. He had a look of someone who needed to get some sleep, but Will wasn't sure how to tell him that as a little girl. Instead, he reached for his favourite dress first.

Will plonked himself on the floor and spread it out over himself as though he was measuring it to try it on.

"This is my favourite," he said. "It's soft and warm and it makes me feel safe."

"You know," Anthony said, crouching to be on Will's level but not crowding him. "When your Daddy first asked for this dress, he wanted it to be grey, like bird feathers."

"Really?"

"Yes," Anthony nodded, reaching out to draw his fingers over his own work. "But then he said that you had the most spectacular blue eyes, and I refused to dull them with grey for your first dress. I wanted this dress to bring out everything wonderful in you so you could see it right away."

Will glanced up at Hannibal, who nodded. He flushed pink, ducking his head. "I like that it's blue," he said softly. "It wasn't too bright. Grey would have been…"

"Too light, too airy," Anthony agreed. "Too much for your very first dress. And then you just seemed like you needed color in your life. Deep colors, certainly, but color."

Dark greens, deep purples. Will nodded along. "Nancy has this dress too," he said, emboldened, "But you never made her any of the others. You should make Nancy more dresses."

It was probably rude. The sort of thing Hannibal would disapprove of. But Anthony just nodded. “I should, shouldn’t I? Let’s make a deal.”

Will tilted his head, curious.

“I was *so* excited when your Daddy started ordering you sundresses. I love your big heavy things, but the *colors* sweetheart.”

“What’s wrong with my colors?”

“Nothing,” Anthony said, waving a hand, “they look lovely on you. But you deserve *brighter* colors. Things suitable for a little girl.”

Will ducked his head shyly.

“I’m here to make two dresses today,” Anthony explained. “A big, heavy dress like the one you’re holding, and another summer dress. If you’ll pick a brighter color for both of them, I’ll make the same for Nancy.”

Will’s eyes widened, and he turned to look over his shoulder at Hannibal. “Can I really choose the colors, Daddy?”

Hannibal’s smile was so fond, the way he looked at Will made Will want to curl up small and be held and hugged. He felt so safe.

“Yes, sweetheart, you can choose the colors. Any color you like.”

Will made a happy little sound and squirmed on the floor. He clutched his favourite dress to him and looked at Anthony with wide, beautiful eyes and cheeks flushed with pleasure.

“What kinda colors can I choose?” He asked softly. Anthony’s answering smile made Will weak.

“Whatever your beautiful mind comes up with. I will accept any challenge.”

Will squeaked, pleased, and wriggled again, before starting to list off the colors he liked. Anthony took diligent notes even as Will started to wander off on tangents, and needed Hannibal to bring him back. They settled on a “bright sweet berry color” for Will’s summer dress, and were still thinking about the heavier one, when Will turned to look over his shoulder at Daddy again.

“Can I ask other stuff too, Daddy?”

“Of course, little one. Just remember your manners.”

Will blushed. “Yes, Daddy.”

When he turned to look at Anthony again, the other raised an amused eyebrow. He’d settled with his back against the wall and his notebook on his drawn up knees, and shifted over when Will crawled up to sit next to him.

“Can I have a dress that has more swish and less bows? Daddy loves the bows but I have a lot of dresses with bows, and I want a dress I can swish in.”

“You don’t like the bows?” Hannibal asked, surprised. Will shrugged.

“I like them okay,” he said. “I like them especially when it’s one big one on the chest, or on the back. Or on my hair. But the dark grey dress has like, four hundred bows, and that’s too many.”

“The dark grey dress,” Anthony said thoughtfully. “It had about a dozen, by my count.”

“Four hundred,” Will corrected. He was feeling much more confident now. “At *least* .”

“Less bows,” Anthony said aloud as he wrote, “More swish. Do you like the extra layers beneath your skirt, then?”

“Too stiff,” Will said. “All my summer dresses swish, and my nighties-” He stopped, going tomato red again.

“Will,” Hannibal said gently, “Anthony made your nighties too.”

“You made my nighties too?” Will’s excitement was almost overpowering, the two men couldn’t help but smile as Will started to go through a list of everything he loved about his nighties, counting off on his fingers.

Hannibal watched, pleased, as Will allowed himself to come out of his shell so much, that he felt safe enough to do it here, in their home, in his nursery, with someone else around to witness. His love for Will was incalculable, and this just made him feel breathless with wonder. His Will, his little girl - beautiful and confident and strong.

He noticed, too, that Anthony regarded Will with a mixture of delight and longing. He had no fear that Anthony would try anything untoward - he’d known the man a long time, longer than he and Will had been together, even, and understood the longing came from a passive place of desire.

Anthony was in demand, he didn’t just make beautiful dresses for private clients, he designed and sewed costumes for theatre, sometimes was commissioned to work on films. He traveled, he worked crazy hours, he had a varied and changeable life. It was because of this that he’d never found a little boy or girl of his own; he was scared such changeability would be difficult to get along with, hard to fit in around play and care.

He treated every client’s little as his own, and put the utmost love and care into creating their individual wardrobes for them. Hannibal, of course, was his most avid appreciator, and his oldest patron. He’d made more dresses for Will than for any other little, so it made sense that he looked at this vibrant little girl as though he and she had been acquainted for many years.

“You know, I’ve never had such an enthusiastic supporter of my work, Hannibal, you should take a leaf out of you little girl’s book and praise me more.”

“Daddy,” Will said, scandalized, “have you been *rude?”*

Anthony appeared delighted to see Hannibal scolded. “He’s *dreadful* to me, really. One would think you *despised* my dresses.”

In Will’s eager nervousness, the joke went over his head, he whirled on Anthony so hard that he shook the bow in his hair loose; it sank to rest somewhere around his nape. “I don’t!” He said vehemently. “I love my dresses.”

Anthony smirked at Hannibal. “Well, I should get to work making you new ones, then. And if you’ll come downstairs with us, you can help me get started.”

Wide-eyed, Will followed him. Downstairs, There was a suitcase, nearly as tall as Anthony himself was. “This is where I keep my magic,” he said, opening it with a flourish.

Inside, there must have been hundreds of fabric samples, dozens of boxes of beads and buttons, even a few loose bows. Will hesitated, though he wanted to run his fingers over every swatch.

“Go ahead,” Anthony encouraged. “Worry about the feel, whatever you like, I can order or dye the right color.”

Will squeaked in delight and turned to Daddy, just to make sure it was truly okay. Hannibal kissed the top of Will's head and took his time to fix his slipped bow.

"Go on, sweet girl, just be careful."

"I will, Daddy."

"And remember you still need to tell Anthony what colour you'd like your more formal dress to be."

Will bounced on the balls of his feet and reached into the box of wonders before him as Anthony and Hannibal continued to talk behind him. Things Will didn't need to worry about; sizing, price, logistics of pick up or delivery.

Will ran his fingers over velvet, over silk and silk blends, over lace of different style and makes, over ribbons, so many ribbons.

"Sweetheart?"

"Yes, Daddy?" Will turned to look at the two of them finding a pair of fond expressions looking back. He blushed and bit his lip, hand immediately going up to tug a curl. Anthony clicked his tongue and looked at Hannibal again.

"You're right. She's absolutely the sweetest thing." To Will he added, "sweetheart I have to go soon, but you need to tell me what color you'd like your second dress to be."

"Yellow." Will told him, without hesitation. "I'd like a yellow dress please."

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

> *Will had never been very good at resisting Hannibal. "Damn you," he groaned, pushing himself up. "I'm wearing pajama pants," he warned. "It's too early for jeans."*
>
> *"Of course."*
>
> Our boys go on vacation!

Will had finally clawed himself, with tooth and nail, two weeks of vacation time. It wasn't that Jack was unwilling to give it -- Will so rarely took leave that it was almost strange that he wanted to -- but more that he truly couldn't guarantee Will the time. Criminals didn't care that it was summer, that people wanted to relax. In the end, Jack had agreed on the condition that should Will be needed, he would consult over the phone or through conference calls.

Will had expected that they would spend the time at home, lounging in the air conditioned downstairs den or enjoying the sun outside. He had not expected a packed car and an early wake up call the first day of his vacation.

"Don't wanna." He mumbled. He wasn't little, he was just sleepy. Mornings had never been Will's forte, even at school. He groaned as Hannibal stroked his hair and gently squeezed his shoulder.

"I made coffee," he told him. For that, at least, Will was willing to raise his head. "A large cup for the road."

"Road?"

"I've a surprise for us."

"Surprise for *me* ," Will grumbled. "You already know. Hannibal, you know I don't do well with surprises."

Hannibal crouched beside the bed, pressing a lingering kiss to Will's temple. "Indulge me?" He murmured.

Will had never been very good at resisting Hannibal. "Damn you," he groaned, pushing himself up. "I'm wearing pajama pants," he warned. "It's too early for jeans."

"Of course."

Hannibal was alarmingly cheery for how early it was, as he led WIll out to the car. He handled the suitcases himself, ushering Will into the front seat with a pillow.

“Hannibal, where are we going?” Will said, craning his neck to look around as if he might see right through into the trunk to discern what Hannibal had packed.

“You’ll see. Would you like your coffee, or some quiet rest time?”

Quiet rest time was what Hannibal called it when he thought Will needed a nap, but Will was not little enough to be commanded into one. Will gave him a narrow-eyed glare.

“Exactly how long is this drive, Hannibal?”

“Long enough to be worth being rested at the destination,” Hannibal replied cryptically. Will snorted.

“If we’re off that long, we should take the dogs.”

“The dogs have a sitter coming,” Hannibal assured him, taking Will’s hand when it seemed he would panic. “I’ve called the man you usually have watching them, Will, they’re in good hands.”

Will swallowed thickly but nodded. He didn’t like surprises, he wasn’t used to surprises being good things; in his line of work they rarely were. But he trusted Hannibal. He trusted that if Hannibal said the dogs would be alright, they would be alright. They had lived together long enough that Will knew, he *knew for a fact,* that Hannibal cared for them as deeply as Will did. And he cared for Will deeper still.

He’d never surprise him with something unwelcome.

Challenging, sure, but not unwelcome.

He took the coffee.

As Hannibal pulled away, conversation was light and deliberately skirting any hints of where they were going. Will complained about being sleepy, leaned over to kiss Hannibal on the cheek when he’d woken up a bit more. They talked about how good it was to finally have time to themselves without work interfering. They talked about the weather, and laughed about the fact that they were talking about the weather.

Eventually, despite the coffee, Will did curl up in the front seat with a sigh. He faced Hannibal, keeping his eyes on him as long as he could before he just… couldn’t anymore. And then he dozed.

Hannibal let Will drift. He’d chosen their early departure time purposefully, knowing Will would eventually waver and sleep. Will slept better since they’d begun to play regularly and moved in together. He had come to need far more sleep than he had before Hannibal, and Hannibal hoped that his nap would take them all the way through to the rental home. If Will read the signs, he was far too clever for the trip to remain a surprise.

Besides, Will was always more relaxed after a nap. Sweeter. If not little, at the very least softer around the edges. Hannibal was determined to have Will relaxed this trip. He deserved that sort of relief, one that came far too rarely.

Will roused when the car finally slowed to a stop, blinking owlishly up at Hannibal. “We there?” He murmured, his voice gravelly and thick with sleep.

“Take your time,” Hannibal said, pressing a kiss to his forehead. “I’ll get the bags.”

Will frowned, peering out the window. His eyes widened, and despite Hannibal’s offer, he scrambled for his belt. “Hannibal, you didn’t.”

The house was tall and narrow, three stories with a wrap around porch and a bench swing. The fence around the yard was too tall to see over, but the backdrop was what drew Will’s eyes.

A long strip of beach, miraculously empty despite the blazing summer sun. Will stepped out of the car, looking first one way and then the other. The nearest house was a tiny speck in the distance, and even that was largely obscured by a crop of trees

“How in the *hell--”*

“The owners own several acres,” Hannibal explained.

Will turned back to him, expression open and vulnerable and wide before he laughed, shaking his head. He was standing in pyjama pants and a ratty shirt in front of a beach house with its own private beach. He was here with Hannibal, because Hannibal had promised. He had promised to take them to a beach together for summer.

“I didn’t pack anything,” he said, stepping back towards the car and leaning his shoulder against Hannibal until the other draped an arm around him.

“You did,” Hannibal countered, “by proxy. We have the house for ten days.”

“Ten days,” Will sighed, finally allowing himself to relax against his partner, now that the shock had worn off. “God, how did I get so lucky?”

Hannibal just kissed his temple again, nuzzling Will’s hair. “The key is on the fob. Go have a look inside while I bring everything in.”

Will did, shouldering a bag despite Hannibal’s gentle protests, and felt his jaw drop a second time. Inside, the house was enormous and open; similar to their home, there was a mezzanine floor that overlooked the large living and sitting area. There was a fireplace, though they’d hardly have use for it, a deck that led right out onto the sand with a hot tub to one side. Upstairs were several bedrooms, though Will instinctively set his things down in the master, where the windows went floor to ceiling and overlooked the bay.

It felt unreal.

It felt like magic.

Will felt a happy little shudder roll down his spine. There was a certain familiar energy buzzing underneath his skin. Will was ecstatic in all forms. As himself, the prospect of ten days alone with his lover, no work schedules, nothing but luxury, was intoxicating.

But there was another part, a part Will felt slightly guilty about. This was Hannibal's vacation too, he did not need to be taking care of his little girl. Nor was Will certain he could drop, open and exposed as they were out here.

It didn't stop the excitement. The rush of shear joy, the urge to dance, to rise up onto his toes and bounce. It was an urge he'd grown used to indulging in; it felt odd to instead cross the room to unpack his things into the dresser.

Everything he unpacked was comfortable. Hannibal had carefully selected all of Will's favorites.

It was also all decidedly masculine. Will told himself he was relieved. Hannibal had made it clear which Will he would prefer for the trip, and Will wouldn't have to worry about being seen or being unable to drop properly.

When Hannibal came up behind him and wrapped his arms around Will, Will leaned back, setting his hands to rest over Hannibal's. He turned his head to nuzzle against Hannibal's cheek and kissed there, making a soft questioning sound. Hannibal replied with one of his own, and they just stood there for a while, close and pressed together.

"Would you like to help me with breakfast?" Hannibal asked him finally, letting go of Will only long enough to circle him and lean against the dresser.

"We have food?" Will asked, amused. Hannibal hummed, inclining his head. So he'd prepared earlier, or he'd brought most of their kitchen from home on the road with them. Clever man. "Will you absolutely hate me if I ask for something… basic?"

"Go on."

"Just… scrambled eggs, cooked on the fat of the bacon we fry in the pan before, half a bun toasted on the pan after the eggs."

"Seared tomatoes, wilted spinach," Hannibal added, smiling. Will laughed, nodding. "Sauce?"

"Cheater," Will grinned. Hannibal's hollandaise sauce was one of Will's vices. "Yes, please."

"I'll show you how to make it."

"I'll mess it up."

"I doubt that," Hannibal leaned in and took Will's chin gently between his fingers, leaning in to kiss him. "Will you let me try?"

Will sighed, relaxing against him, and nodded.

“Did you want to change, before we start?”

Will blinked up at him and snorted softly. “I’m dressed in pyjamas at a beach house, do I really need to change?”

“That’s entirely up to you,” Hannibal said, letting go of Will to grab one of the bags he’d brought up. “What are you feeling today?”

When he opened this bag, Will saw his things… his little things. Soft shirts and denim overalls, summer dresses, frilled socks, cardigans… pastels, pinks, greens. He swallowed.

“You don’t have to do that,” he whispered. “This should be a vacation for both of us, you need the break as much as I do.”

“Ten days is a maddeningly long time to be without my little girl,” Hannibal said. He reached for Will again, his waist this time, drawing him in close. “Will,” he said, pressing his lips against Will’s temple. “I can think of no better way to spend my time than with you, in whatever form you take. It’s no hardship to be your Daddy.”

Will swallowed around a lump in his throat. He knew, of course he knew, that Hannibal enjoyed their time together. That he sometimes craved it as much as Will did.

But it was still *work.* Dressing Will, bathing him, shaving him, feeding him. Indulging him in a hundred different ridiculous games, in a thousand childish fairy tales. Hannibal may very well love his job, but it was still a job. How could he properly unwind, if he was babysitting? “Not today,” Will whispered, a jolt of longing tugging at him. He wanted it, of course he wanted it. He wanted to put on his pastel t-shirts and go racing down to the beach. He wanted Hannibal to pull his hair back into a ponytail to keep it out of his face, and rub way too much sunscreen all over him until Will was squirming and impatient. He wanted to excise some of this charged excitement burning within him.

But no. He was not going to do that to Hannibal. They were going to eat fancy food and have lots of vigorous sex and just in general do what adults did on vacations.

Hannibal looked at him, studying his features. He knew Will too well. Will carefully schooled his expression into one of indifference.

“As you wish,” Hannibal said, but he nudged the suitcase towards Will. “Will you help me unpack before breakfast? Some of your things do better on hangers.”

They moved around each other to a choreography neither had planned. Once in a while, one would reach out to gently touch the other on the shoulder, or run a hand through familiar strands of hair.

Will hung up his summer dresses, hung up his overalls. He folded his shirts and nighties and put them in a drawer. His hands lingered in longing over a pair of panties before he set them away as well. He wore panties regularly beneath his clothes, now, but they weren’t *these.* These were playful and silly, covered in strawberries or dotted with bubbles.

With a sigh, Will reached back into the bag for the remainder of his things and plucked out a sippy cup.

He hadn't realized he stood frozen until Hannibal touched a reassuring hand between his shoulders.

"Are you alright sweetheart?"

"Yeah, Daddy," the words came so easily, so absolutely naturally, that Will had to blink to remind himself where he was and who he was here. He turned to Hannibal, expression apologetic, and found nothing but a smile there, gentle and sure. Will swallowed, holding up the cup with a helpless shrug.

"How about some juice with breakfast?"

Will sighed out the tension from his shoulders and nodded. If he could have that, just that, it would be enough to get him through. Something small, something to hold on to. Something to tide him over.

It wasn't that he didn't want to be older, it was that Daddy's little girl was *aching* for a run in the sand, her dress trailing behind her as she shrieked in joy. And she could be very demanding.

Hannibal took the cup from Will, leaning in to place a kiss on his cheek. "Come along, little one. You can crack the eggs for me." He took Will's hand, twining their fingers together. As if Will might get lost on the way to the kitchen.

The touch grounded Will. It kept him in the moment, here, with Hannibal. Safe, with Hannibal.

In the kitchen, Hannibal settled Will onto a stool at the breakfast bar, a bowl and a carton of eggs before him. After a moment, the sippy cup joined them, full to the brim with orange juice.

It was easy. Peaceful. Hannibal talked while he cooked the bacon, detailing sights and attractions in the area.

"Of course," he said, glancing over his shoulder at Will-- Will flushed and slammed his cup back down on the counter-- "we can also stay here and enjoy the vacation home for the duration of our trip."

"What do *you* want to do?" Will asked. Hannibal offered him that uncomfortably knowing smile.

"I'd like to spend this time making you feel happy and relaxed."

Will clicked his tongue, but he was smiling. "Cheater."

Breakfast was perfect. Buttery eggs and crunchy bacon, tomatoes that burst in their mouths. They talked as they ate, about how Hannibal had found this place, if he'd been here before,

about vacations they'd taken as kids, as adults.

By the time they were finished, Will felt better. Whatever energy had been hammering at him from the inside had gone dormant for the moment, and Will helped wash the dishes and dry them before asking if they could go for a walk.

"Along the beach," he added. "I love the dogs, and god knows I miss them now, but… it's been an age since I could walk along the water without mentally keeping a count of the things and checking to make sure no one was fighting with the others."

Hannibal smiled, asked if Will would like to change.

Will went with an older pair of jeans that he folded up to just beneath his knee, and a flannel shirt open over his chest. Hannibal went with a light linen suit without a tie -- for him, almost naked out in public.

The beach house had about a mile of private beach. The house Will had seen as a speck along the coast was vacated for the moment, the owners had a habit of living in it 6 months of the year and hadn't yet returned from where they lived the other 6. So they had almost two miles to themselves, to walk with their toes in the water, kicking up snow-white foam. Will held Hannibal's hand, fingers folded together, and leaned into him. Without realizing he did it, he started talking about the kinds of fish one could find in this region, which were most prized, which tasted better, which demanded certain lures and which were easier to grab up with a net.

By the time they'd turned to walk back, Will realized he'd been talking non stop, and Hannibal hadn't once interrupted.

"God, I'm sorry," Will laughed, rubbing his face beneath his glasses. "People've told me talking about fishing is like talking about golf: no one gives a shit."

"I can't speak for the no-doubt thrilling intricacies of golf," Hannibal said with a wry smile, "But I like listening to you talk about fishing."

Will shook his head. "You don't need to placate me," he insisted. "I'm not a child." Not now. Not *yet* . "You can tell me when I'm boring you."

To his surprise, Hannibal brought Will's hand up to his lips. "Nothing that allows me to see that smile on your face could ever be boring."

Will flushed. He would never fully grow accustomed to the way Hannibal spoke to him. Flirtatious, fond. Every word he said seemed to be perfectly tailored to make Will feel weak, and yet he always seemed genuine. With Hannibal, Will always felt like the compliments were real. Hannibal made sure of it.

"I got too excited," Will said, clearing his throat. "We aren't here to fish."

"We could be."

“No,” Will said firmly. “No, this vacation is about *both* of us. The things we do together should be things we both enjoy.”

Hannibal opened his mouth to argue and Will pressed his fingers up against his lips. “And telling me you enjoy *me,* isn’t going to cut it.”

Hannibal hummed but relented, keeping his thoughts to himself as Will stepped away and kicked playfully at the incoming tide. By the time they returned home, the water was up much higher than it had been when they set out.

Will tugged Hannibal’s hand before he could step up onto the porch and met him with a kiss when he turned around. It was playful, warm, and Will was soon smiling too wide to keep their lips pressed together but it didn’t matter. When Hannibal turned to Will properly, Will let go of his hand to wrap his arms around his shoulders instead.

The sun was radiating down on them, just past its peak for the day. It would make the beach impossible to stay on until the late afternoon, but it would make the sea as warm as a heated pool for them when they went out later to enjoy it.

Will hummed when Hannibal turned his face against him, and nuzzled their noses together. He was happy, he realized, he was so damn happy he could barely contain it.

“I want you,” he murmured, tracing fingers over Hannibal’s jaw, down to his throat. “So much I can’t even stand it.”

“I’m yours,” Hannibal replied, just as warm, just as charged. Will grinned, biting his lip before letting it go with a sigh. He shrugged his shirt off and let it fall to the sand, and raised his eyebrow at Hannibal before stepping past him on his way to the house, implication clear.

Hannibal dogged his steps, just a few paces behind. Enjoying the show, no doubt, as Will draped his belt over the banister, left his jeans in the hall. In the doorway to the master bedroom, Will turned, smirking as he tucked his thumbs into the waistband of his panties. Hannibal had shed his thin suit jacket and unbuttoned the top three buttons of his shirt. He was working on the forth, his eyes dark and dangerous. He stalked towards Will, and Will backed away, leading Hannibal to the bed.

At the edge of the bed, Will lost his underwear. He’d barely kicked his leg free before Hannibal had hands on his hips, hoisting Will onto the bed. Will let himself fall back among the pillows, one knee drawn up, watching as Hannibal stripped.

Hannibal joined him quickly, parting Will’s thighs with warm hands, slotting himself between them. “How do you want me?” he rumbled, voice low, gravelly. Will shivered, his cock thickening against his thigh.

“I’m not picky,” he whispered. “As long as I have you.”

Hannibal kissed him roughly, hoisting one of Will’s thighs up around his waist. He rutted against Will’s hip, hard and hot and everything Will needed.

Their sex life was varied. It wasn't unusual for them to have lazy morning sex before they went to work, or to catch each other in the living room and enjoy the couch. Once in a while a toy, or an implement made things interesting. As an adult, Will could take a lot of pain, and loved it, and their joining now was far from gentle.

Teeth and hands and desperate little sounds.

Will rolled them, rocking down against Hannibal, before a hand landed sharply against his thigh and the smack rang out in the room followed by Will's moan. It wasn't long before Will was getting a thorough bare-handed thrashing in bed, biting the sheets and stroking himself frantically to completion. By the time Hannibal started eating him out, Will was melting into the sheets, relaxed and quivering with need.

After, they took a quick cool shower and climbed into bed to doze. The heat, the new location, the promise of ten days of freedom was oddly exhausting, and Will fell into sleep faster than he expected to. Beneath his cheek, Hannibal's heart beat steady and slow.

Will woke because the sun was in his eyes and he felt like a crumpled up piece of paper. His muscles ached for a stretch, so he indulged in that; pulling his arms up over his head and stretching his legs out all the way to his pointed toes. Then he flopped down and wriggled fussily in the sheets until he was comfortable again, nose tucked against the back of Hannibal's neck, just where the shorter hairs tickled his face.

His bottom smarted and his mind was far too awake to keep sleeping, and he knew Hannibal was awake because he could tell. He could always tell.

"Want a snack," Will mumbled, dropping an arm over Hannibal's middle. "Daddy can I've a snack?"

Hannibal turned in his arms, tilting Will's head up to nuzzle their noses together. Will giggled, unable to help himself. "Fruit, or cheese and crackers?" Hannibal asked. Will bit his lip.

"What kinda fruits?"

"How does my little girl feel about watermelon?"

Hannibal knew exactly how his little girl felt about watermelon. Will liked watermelon, but when he was small, if not thoroughly supervised, he would eat himself sick. He liked to see how far he could spit the seeds, though he had been completely unsuccessful in convincing Hannibal to challenge him.

Will had spent half the summer with sticky hands and stained dresses. Now, he was practically shaking with his eagerness, wide awake in Hannibal's arms.

"That," Will said. "That, please, Daddy!"

Hannibal pressed a kiss to Will's bare shoulder. "Alright, sweetheart. I'll go cut some up for us. Why don't you pick out something pretty to wear?"

Will blinked at him, lips parted, but didn't shake his head or nod. It wasn't unusual for him to pick his clothes. Daddy put his clothes on him, but Will liked having the freedom to choose. But hesitation tugged at him… he shouldn't have been little now, he should have been Will Graham, on holiday with his boyfriend. He should have…

"It's hot," he complained quietly. Hannibal smiled and moved to the dresser, opening up the appropriate drawer for Will's little things.

"I know sweetheart. You needn't dress for going out, but you know Daddy doesn't abide his little girl walking around in just her underpants."

He found a pair for panties for Will and turned to show him. Will nodded, and crawled out from the sheets to find a pair of cotton shorts as well. After some deliberation, he took out a sparkly white shirt as well. He bounced happily on the balls of his feet as Hannibal dressed him, and wrapped his arms around Hannibal's shoulders as he kissed him on the cheek.

"Can I dress Daddy?" he asked. Hannibal tilted his head, thoughtful.

"I don't know if you could reach," he teased. Will giggled.

"But can I choose what Daddy gets to wear?" he wheedled.

Hannibal appeared to consider it, for a long moment. Long enough that Will knew he was teasing, and he pouted, rising onto his toes to look Hannibal in the eyes properly. " *Daddy* ," he complained, not *quite* a whine-- because Hannibal would have chided him for it-- but close enough that Hannibal's eyes narrowed.

"Go ahead, then," Hannibal said, turning Will with hands on his waist. He nudged him towards the dresser. "Pick something for Daddy."

Given that much freedom, it was tempting to pick on Hannibal, stick him in something embarrassing and mismatched. But what Will really wanted was for them to be comfortable together. Something Hannibal could play with him in.

Hannibal apparently owned shorts. Will looked at them with wide eyes, immediately thrusting them towards Hannibal. "These!" He demanded, loud and insistent. He didn't wait for an answer, forcing them into Hannibal's hands and turning back to the drawers to find a shirt.

Polos . Will had known, theoretically, that Hannibal owned casual clothes. He'd even seen some before. But there was something about Hannibal in shorts and a lightweight cotton polo that had him hiding a grin in his hands.

He held out a shirt in pale green after several moments of consideration. They matched the shorts in that those were light colored too. Not that it mattered too terribly, they weren't going *out* just enjoying their time together at the beach house. Hannibal sighed, though his eyes were wrinkled at the corners, and obediently dressed himself in the things his little girl had chosen.

“Now,” he said. “Daddy will fix us up some watermelon. You’re welcome to join me in the kitchen, or explore the house if you like, but don’t go outside without me, alright?”

“Yes, Daddy!”

Will raced past, grabbing the railing as he tore down the stairs. He ran about the house as though he hadn’t given it due consideration that very morning, making sounds of delight at every new room or feature he found. By the time he moved to the kitchen where Hannibal was his hair was wild and his eyes were bright.

“It’s so big!” Will exclaimed, grinning.

“It is,” Hannibal agreed, setting out a bowl with some watermelon squares and a fork for Will to eat it with. “Like a castle.”

Will gave the fork a disapproving look, then glanced back at Hannibal. Hannibal was watching him pointedly.

“Eat like a lady, please,” he said, tucking a cloth napkin into the collar of Will’s shirt, shielding the white fabric.

“I *am* a lady,” Will said with a haughty sniff, cheeks pink. It was the sort of phrase he used to struggle with, but now it fell from his lips as easy as breathing. “A *princess* , in fact.”

Hannibal pressed a kiss to the crown of Will’s head. “Of course you are,” he said. “Eat up, and we can go outside for a bit.”

Will wriggled happily in his seat, stabbing at a square.The beach had been wonderful that morning, but the idea of sand between his bare toes was *thrilling* . Maybe he’d even go out dressed like this. Hannibal had *promised* that he wouldn’t have to worry about anyone seeing them.

Hannibal watched his lovely little girl for a moment before moving further into the house. He turned on some outside lights, so they’d be ready to welcome them when they returned, inevitably late, back to the house. When he came back to the kitchen, Will was in the middle of shoveling watermelon cubes into his mouth with his hands, juice dripping between his fingers. He looked up, like a deer in headlights, and slowly crunched down on the fruit already in his mouth.

Hannibal tilted his head, affecting a frown. “Sweetheart,”

“I’m sorry,” Will managed around his mouthful. Then he swallowed. “It’s just so good, Daddy, and hands are faster than forks. And no one’s here to see.”

“Daddy’s here to see,” Hannibal reminded him. He stepped closer and leaned against the counter, across from Will. “And you know Daddy doesn’t like messes.”

Will pouted and nodded, before taking up another cube between his fingers and offering it innocently to Hannibal. With a huff of breath, Hannibal leaned in to take it. He winked.

“Do as I say, not as I do,” he reminded Will before kissing his forehead. “Finish your watermelon. Properly. And then we’ll go for a walk.”

Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

> *“Do you trust Daddy?” Hannibal asked him gently, wrapping his arms around Will and holding him against himself, safe and sound. He waited until Will nodded, a hand coming up to tug a curl anxiously. “Do you trust Daddy to keep you safe?”*
>
> *“Yes, Daddy.”*

In the end, Will had needed to change his shirt. He’d pouted all the way through, squirming as Hannibal wiped his face and hands with a damp washcloth. He didn’t like to be sticky, but resisting cleanliness just seemed like the right thing to do, when they played these games.

Hannibal set Will’s white shirt out to soak with stain remover, and pulled a pink t-shirt with cherries on it over his head instead.

In the doorway, Will paused, glancing down at himself. He bit his lip, tugging at the hem of his shirt.

“Did you want clouds instead?” Hannibal asked. Will shook his head. He *liked* his cherry shirt. It was cute, and brand new. He hadn’t gotten to wear it yet, and he’d been wanting.

But this was outside. And not outside on their private property, with a high fence and trees all about. Outside in a strange new place.

“Maybe we do the hot tub instead?” Will squeaked. “Or play a game! I saw you packed some toys.”

“Of course Daddy packed your toys,” Hannibal told him, stepping closer and drawing a hand through Will’s hair. “And you’re welcome to play with them, inside or on the beach as you like. But wouldn’t you like to dip your toes into the water, little one? It’ll be so nice and warm.”

Will did. God he did want to. He wanted to run into the water and run back out again, half-drenched, and hug Hannibal tight. He wanted to chase the waves and spread his arms and pretend he was an airplane coming in to land. He wanted to kick up sand and build castles in it and write silly things for the ocean to wipe away.

He wanted to so badly.

But he couldn’t. Not here. Not where people could see.

“But what if--”

“Do you trust Daddy?” Hannibal asked him gently, wrapping his arms around Will and holding him against himself, safe and sound. He waited until Will nodded, a hand coming up to tug a curl anxiously. “Do you trust Daddy to keep you safe?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“Come see the water with me,” Hannibal said, letting go of him and holding out a hand for Will to take. “We’ll just have a look together. And if you want to go back inside after that, we’ll go, I promise. Hold Daddy’s hand.”

Will took Hannibal’s hand with his own trembling one, letting Hannibal guide him. He looked around anxiously as they went down to the beach, but they seemed to be as isolated as they had been earlier.

Will’s hair was long enough, now, that he often wore it in a bun to go to work. He was clean-shaven. From a distance, it was entirely possible that someone might mistake him for a woman.

But he was still tense as Hannibal led him down to the water. Still wary, watchful.

As promised, Hannibal stopped just before the water, not yet close enough for the incoming tide to wash over their feet. They had come barefoot, and now Will dug his toes into the warm sand.

“What do you think, sweetheart?”

Will ducked his head, hiding behind a curtain of curls. “S’nice,” He mumbled, kicking at the sand.

“What if we took a few more steps, hmm? We can get our feet wet before we go back.”

Will nodded, absolutely no need to put on a show of shyness when he was still so worried that someone was about to jump out from behind a bush and surprise them. They stepped closer to the water, enough that the foam touched their toes when the wave pulled back into the sea. Will sighed, tilting his head up to the sun and closing his eyes. This way, he didn’t need to look, didn’t need to see if anyone was around. This way, it didn’t matter.

He followed when Hannibal tugged his hand a little to come closer to the water, and laughed when he felt it cool against his skin. He squeezed Hannibal’s hand.

“There you go, baby girl,” Hannibal whispered, stroking his thumb against Will’s knuckles. “What a brave little thing you’re being for Daddy.”

Will ducked his head again and opened his eyes just a little, just to peek.

They were alone. Just the ocean before them, flat as a pane of glass, the beach on either side of them empty. Only their house behind them, welcoming and safe. Just them. Just the two of them in their own little paradise.

Gently, Will kicked up his toes against the next wave, watching the water drops fly bright as gemstones through the air. He laughed and did it again, a little harder, sending a sheet of water up. Hannibal pulled Will's hand up, kissing the knuckles. "Go ahead, princess," he said, releasing Will's hand. "I'll keep an eye on you."

Will waded in a little further, just past his ankles, then another step. He giggled as the tide pulled at his feet, sand slipping out from beneath him.

A splash of water hit his side, and he cried out in shock. When he turned, Hannibal was crouched down, one hand in the water, a crooked smile tugging at his lips.

Will grinned, and kicked a wave of water towards Hannibal. He straightened before it could hit his face, but sent another splash towards Will.

And then there was no time to worry. Will was too busy laughing, too busy losing himself in this ridiculous game with the man he loved. His shirt clung to his skin, damp with sea salt, and he could barely breathe for how much love he felt at that moment.

Hannibal caught him around the waist, hoisting Will up off his feet. Will lost it, laughing hysterically as Hannibal pulled him deeper into the water. "Daddy! No!"

"Didn't you once tell Daddy that you're a mermaid princess?" Hannibal asked him, kissing Will's cheek as he wriggled in his hold. "And that was why Daddy had to build you a pool?"

"No!" Will shrieked in joy, tucking his legs up against his stomach as Hannibal waded even deeper in. "Daddy no we'll get all wet!"

Hannibal laughed, kissing Will once more before gently rocking him back and tossing him into the water. Will landed with a sputter, sitting up on the sand. The water came up to his chest here, and just brushed the hems of Hannibal's shorts where he stood, triumphant, over him. Will brought a hand up to swipe the water from his face and looked up at him with a grin.

It was rare that he could get Hannibal into the mood to play so physically. Hannibal was the best possible Daddy, just strict enough, more than loving enough, he spoiled his little girl with presents and lovely dresses and made him the most delicious meals. And once in a while, once in a very little while, he could be coaxed into roughhousing with Will in the garden.

Will held his hand out for him. "Help me up, Daddy!"

"Are you stuck?"

"I'm stuck!" Will laughed, wriggling in place to entrench himself deeper in the sand. When Hannibal took his hand Will tugged him nearer, sharply enough that he lost his footing and fell into the water next to him with a great big splash.

"Now Daddy's stuck too!" Will giggled as Hannibal resurfaced, flicking his hair off his face with grace Will himself could never master.

“So much for our walk,” Hannibal said, though he was grinning, as wide as his smile ever got. To anyone else, he might still have looked somewhat restrained, but Will knew the way joy looked on Hannibal’s features.

“We walked,” Will insisted. He tugged at his shirt, soaked through and riding up over his stomach.

“These aren’t the best swim clothes,” Hannibal said, getting to his feet and pulling Will up with him. “Perhaps we should wear something more suitable when we come down tomorrow.”

Will bit his lip, allowing Hannibal to tug him out of the water and towards the house. “Swimsuits?” He said softly. “My… *my* swimsuits?”

Hannibal stopped and turned, cupping Will’s face in his broad hands. “Only if you want to,” He said, “but I promise you, little one, you are safe here with me.”

Will nodded, eyes on Hannibal, always only on Hannibal, and brought up a hand to cup over Hannibal's own. He did feel safe. He felt loved and understood and cared for. He felt like he mattered.

Inside, Hannibal was quick to undress his little girl and give her a new set of clothes to run about in, and started on a late lunch for them.

Will went upstairs to retrieve some of his toys and contented himself playing in the living area, mumbling nonsensical storylines to Nancy as he arranged blocks into a maze and drove a little car through it. At some point, Hannibal brought him a peanut butter sandwich and his sippy filled with apple juice.

He didn't even realize how much time had passed until Hannibal turned on the light and Will blinked up at him.

"What are you up to, sweet girl?"

Will grinned, spreading his arms to show Hannibal the mess of toys and crayons before him.

"I'm building a city," he proclaimed. "Wanna help?"

Hannibal smiled and lowered himself to the floor. "I'd love nothing more."

At home, Will would fall into his little space deeper and for longer with every week that passed. Watching him allow himself the freedom and peace of it made Hannibal's heart sing. It wasn't only seeing Will open himself up to vulnerability and joy that made Hannibal happy, it was the fact that he was genuinely sleeping better, he was eating a healthier diet, he was more focused and less prone to outbursts.

He was doing better, so much better.

If Hannibal could have convinced Will to quit his job and be Daddy’s little girl full time (or at least *mostly* full time), he would have. There was no peace like waking in the night for water

and finding Will dead asleep beside him, rather than out on the porch watching the dogs with red, tired eyes.

Will had struggled, at first, games coming less naturally to him than they might have to another. He'd overcome that shyness with plenty of practice and encouragement, encouragement he was sorely lacking.

There was a lot he was lacking, it seemed. Encouragement. Unconditional affection. The complete certainty that he was safe, that danger was not just out of sight. That there was someone to chase away the nightmares, the heavy thoughts.

Were Hannibal a lesser man, he could have *killed* Jack Crawford.

He liked Jack well enough, admired his drive, but his single-minded dedication to his job weighed heavily on Will. And Will would never quit on his own, not with Jack there telling him how many lives he was saving.

But Hannibal could give him this, this moment where he stacked a final block and then gleefully slammed a toy car into the tower. This moment where pure, unfiltered *joy* flooded Will's entire being.

He didn't hold his laughter back when it begged to shriek from him anymore. He didn't try to stop himself clapping his hands in delight, or bouncing on the balls of his feet, or clinging to his sippy cup with both hands as though it were made of gold.

He was perfect. He was absolutely perfect.

Hannibal leaned in to kiss Will's temple. Will grinned up at him.

"I love you, Daddy."

Hannibal needed a moment to catch his breath before he could answer him. "I love you too, my precious girl."

Dinner was a hearty stew served with crunchy bread that Will delighted in getting all over the table. He diligently swept up after himself when Daddy told him to help clean up after their meal, and followed Hannibal upstairs to change into his favourite strawberry swimsuit so they could enjoy the hot tub together as the sun set over the water.

Here, Will was more subdued; far from lacking in enthusiasm, but he grew tired far quicker when he was small, and it had been a long, long day. He crossed his arms on the edge of the tub and rested his head on them and watched the beach, the water coming and going in slow pulsing pulls of tide.

He was dozing by the time Hannibal tucked a hand against his cheek and kissed the other.

"Bathtime, little one,"

Will made a fussy sound but curled into Hannibal when he tugged him near, curling up as small as he could in Hannibal's lap in the water.

“We need to clean the salt and chlorine from your skin,” Hannibal explained, holding Will close. “And Daddy will braid your hair before bed.”

Will looked up at that, smiling. “You will?”

“Of course.”

Hannibal’s hands were always gentle, always careful, but there was something to having his hair played with that Will absolutely *relished.* Hannibal always lingered, taking his time, as though each lock needed to be combed and styled individually. His fingers were heaven on Will’s scalp, especially after a long day.

Leaving the hot tub gave Will a chill, but the bath Hannibal drew was blissfully hot. Will sank into it with a happy sigh. He was too tired for his toys, but not so tired that he couldn’t demand and receive Hannibal’s rapt attention. Hannibal scrubbed him clean with a touch that had Will giggling, and then poured cupfuls of water over his hair until he could lather it properly.

It was like a miniature massage. By the time Hannibal was rinsing the cream rinse out of Will’s hair, Will was nearly boneless with pleasure.

“Up we go, darling.”

Will stumbled as he stepped from the tub, leaning heavily on Hannibal for support. Hannibal dried him briskly with a towel even fluffier than the ones they had at home, and then pulled a nightie over his head. Will had some old-fashioned ones that fell all the way to his ankles, but this one barely touched the tops of his knees, straddling the line between girlish comfort and something more adult. Will could sink into the satin and be whoever he was at the time.

He allowed Hannibal to guide him out of the bathroom and into their room, and curled up on his side as Hannibal took care of the clean up. When he returned, Will reached out to him, sleepy and soft, and let Hannibal move him like a rag doll until he was sitting between Hannibal’s legs, Hannibal leaning on the headboard behind him.

As Hannibal first brushed then combed Will’s hair, he told him a story from memory. So many were stories Will had grown up with, but never had they been told as well as how Hannibal told them. He put on different voices, growled when a beast growled, or a scary wolf made his way through the woods. He made the stories come alive for Will as even he, with his incredible imagination, never seemed to be able to.

Hannibal worked Will’s hair into two french braids with careful fingers. Will had let his hair grow out to the point where he had to tie it up for work, now, and Hannibal had to admit that he absolutely loved it. He’d never make Will do anything he didn’t want to do, he would never push him to take on a persona that felt wrong, but the fact that Will no longer felt self conscious, that he chose to keep his hair long, made Hannibal’s heart sing.

The tiny braids curled up just behind Will’s ears and he left the ends loose to avoid any tangling and tears in the morning. Will would work the braids free either on his own, tossing and turning in his sleep, or in the morning when he went to the bathroom.

After, Hannibal just held him as Will started to doze off, arms wrapped around Will as he curled up safe and close against his chest, a hand up against his face with his thumb just tucked up behind his teeth. He looked absolutely at peace.

Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

> *In the water, Will was as weightless as he imagined himself to be when he was small. He was light enough for Hannibal to hold him this way without effort, to start to sway slightly with the motion of the waves, and cradle him near as though Will really were a toddler, a little girl clinging to her Daddy for comfort.*

The braids made Will's hair look curlier than usual, and he spent all morning tugging it and watching it bounce back into a tight spiral again. Hannibal didn't chasten him for it, smiling as he watched Will admire himself in the mirror, still in his nightie and turning back and forth just enough to make the hem flick, like a dress would.

"I think," Hannibal said after a while, drawing Will's attention back just enough that he looked at Hannibal through the reflection. "That we should build sandcastles today."

Will grinned and whirled around to look at Hannibal properly.

"We'll need spades!"

"I'm sure we can find some," Hannibal told him, coming closer and cupping Will's face before kissing his forehead. "And buckets, too."

"Can we use some of the kitchen stuff?" Will asked, nearly vibrating with excitement. "They'll make some cool patterns and shapes that no one else's castles will have."

"Perhaps," Hannibal narrowed his eyes as he smiled and tucked a curl behind Will's ear that immediately fell into his eyes again. "Go and choose your swimsuit, sweetheart, and Daddy will help you get dressed."

A bit of the wind left Will's sails. He hesitated, looking between the bathroom and the dresser. Hannibal had hung Will's strawberry swimsuit over the shower bar to dry, after they'd come in from the hot tub.

The hot tub had been safe, the walls hiding Will, the fence making him feel shielded even as he looked over it to watch the waves.

The beach would be open, exposed.

Will knew how he felt today. Dainty, sweet, needy.

But he couldn't have that. He had to be an adult. He had to make adult decisions.

Will laid out his grown-man swim trunks out on the bed. He couldn't make himself put them on. He couldn't even bring himself to tug his nightie over his head.

He felt so *pretty* . Smooth, soft, loved, *beautiful* . There were benefits to being Will Graham, adult, lover, but that wasn't who he was today. He couldn't help it, it wasn't what he wanted right now.

What he wanted was hanging over the tub, dry and ready for him.

Warm arms wrapped around Will's waist, tugging him back against a sturdy chest. "That's not appropriate for my sweet girl," he said softly, pressing the words into Will's curls. "Do you trust me?"

Will closed his eyes tight, as a child would when confronted with something frightening. So tight that he could magic the scary thing away. He sighed, letting his hands come to rest over Hannibal's where he held him.

"Yes, Daddy." he whispered.

Because Hannibal, he trusted. Hannibal, he believed. It was the rest of the world that worried him, the rest of the world that would judge him, judge them.

Hannibal kissed Will's temple and nuzzled his hair and squeezed him just a little tighter.

"I brought the suit with lemons on it as well," Hannibal told him. "Why don't you wear that one today?"

Will swallowed and nodded, smiling when Hannibal kissed his cheek and let him go. He moved to the dresser to get the aforementioned garment and helped Will out of his nightie and into the swimsuit. Kneeling, he looked up at Will and smiled.

"Sunscreen," he said, "and a hat. We don't want to get sunburn like we did in the garden, do we?"

"No, Daddy," Will mumbled.

He accepted the sunscreen with the appropriate level of squirming and struggle that left some cream not properly rubbed into his skin. He accepted the floppy hat that Hannibal put on his head. And he tilted his head curiously when Hannibal held out a large shirt for him. It was slightly off-white, and one that Hannibal sometimes slept in when the cold nipped through the house. On Will, it was long enough to cover his thighs.

"Just while the sun is at its highest," Hannibal reasoned. But Will knew the real reason for the shirt, and was overwhelmed with gratitude. It would hide him. Not entirely, but enough. And should he feel safe to take it off, he could do so at any moment.

But he didn't have to. He could leave it on, and know that underneath was a pale blue one-piece with a swishy skirt, dotted with lemon slices like starbursts. He could have that secret, safe with him, and he could throw himself down into the sand and let go.

Not getting sunburned was also nice.

Hannibal held Will's hand as they trudged down towards the water, each carrying a hefty bag full of every tool Will could think of to create his vision.

"Now, you'll have to teach Daddy," Hannibal said, settling down cross-legged on a towel. "I've never built a sand castle before."

Will gave him a look, one eyebrow raised. Sometimes, when he was playing Daddy, Hannibal fibbed. It helped Will relax and feel more confident in guiding their play, and it meant he could affect overdramatic reactions to make Will giggle.

"You're kidding." Will finally said.

"I'm afraid not. We only went a handful of times when I was small, and I was more preoccupied with collecting shells and sneaking as deep as I could into the water before my father chastised me."

Will hid a smile in his hand, imagining the stubborn set of Hannibal's face on a small child.

"After I came to stay with my uncle," Hannibal continued, "I considered myself much too old for such things. I did not know, at the time, that one is never too old to enjoy themselves."

Will beamed at him and made himself comfortable on the sand, wriggling about until he'd made a divot with his butt and could sit comfortably in the slightly cooler sand there.

"The best castles," he lectured, flipping his curls out of his eyes. "Have a strong foundation."

They sat close enough to the water that the sand they had to work with was damp but not soggy, so when they started to mold a misshapen base for their castle, it didn't crumble and fall away.

As much as Will scoffed at Hannibal's lack of experience as a sandcastle architect, he himself hadn't spent much time at the beach as a young one. By the water, yes, often, almost every day, but rarely on actual beaches with sand. His father worked on boats that had their own berths, or were in the garages of rich people who didn't look twice at either of them. Will had kept himself busy, and had learned how to help his dad early on.

He couldn't remember the last time he'd built a sand castle.

So he put his heart and soul into this one; all his missed opportunities to be a child, all his shyness that stopped him from approaching other kids playing on the beach with buckets and plastic molds that Will's dad could never afford to buy him, everything and anything to fortify the sand and make it as strong as possible for their masterpiece.

It was… It was certainly a structure, of some sort. There were some peaks that were higher than others, shaped by careful hands and decorated with ridges created by tart tins. There was a dip among the sand walls that somewhat resembled a courtyard. Hannibal had thoughtfully supplied a handful of tiny shells to line the lopsided turrets.

Will glared down at the misshapen lumps. He wasn't *truly* disappointed- the fun was in the building, after all, but he'd been hoping for something more photogenic.

Not that he let Hannibal take photos of their exploits.

"Well," Hannibal said. Will turned his stern gaze on him, instead.

" *Don't* say it's lovely," he instructed. "I know when you're patronizing me."

Hannibal took that under consideration, humming. "It has quite a lot of character," he settled on, instead.

"I thought you were supposed to be an artist," Will teased.

"I don't prefer sculpting, and this is not the sort of medium I'm used to working with. Still…" Hannibal glanced thoughtfully at a tower of sand, reaching out and nudging at it, attempting to shape it more smoothly. Instead, the entire thing collapsed, knocking over walls as it fell.

Will burst into giggles.

A moment later, Hannibal's warm laugh joined in, and Will laughed louder, reaching out to collapse another tower with his hands. Then it was a frenzy, the two of them destroying what they had so meticulously built with the same fervor they'd built it. After, Will dropped onto the towel next to Hannibal, chest rising and falling with heaved breaths as he continued to half-heartedly run his feet through the sand that was all that was left of their creation.

When Hannibal set a hand to Will's stomach, rubbing gently, Will hummed, pleased, and settled.

For a while, they just rested that way; Hannibal sitting up and stroking circles into Will's belly, Will splayed out half on and half off the towel taking in the sun.

It felt nice. It felt normal. Will's shirt had hitched up high enough to reveal his swimsuit beneath and he didn't care, he didn't move to adjust it because it didn't matter. Hannibal was here, and nothing could go wrong with him around. Nothing. Daddy would always keep his little girl safe.

After a while, Will stretched out with an exaggerated groan and tipped the floppy hat that covered his face up enough to see Hannibal again.

"Wanna swim," he informed him.

"You may," Hannibal replied easily, giving Will a warm look. Will bit his lip and squirmed about until his elbows were supporting him in a reclined sitting position.

"Wanna swim with Daddy," he amended.

Hannibal pretended to consider it, until Will turned the full force of a pout on him.

“Alright,” he finally said, “I suppose there’s time before lunch.”

As if he hadn’t always intended to come in with Will. Will rolled his eyes fondly, hopping to his feet.

Safe. He felt well and truly safe here. Hannibal had promised him their stretch of beach was isolated, and true to his word, Will had not seen so much as a lost car since their arrival.

Decision made, heart racing, Will raised his arms above his head. “Off.”

He didn’t have to clarify. He never did, with Hannibal. Nor did Hannibal stop to double check, and thus give Will more time to fret and panic and change his mind. He set Will’s hat on the towel, caught the hem of Will’s shirt in his hands, and hoisted it up and off his head.

Will’s curls were in his eyes. He brushed them away and found Hannibal smiling, so achingly fond that Will thought he felt first-date butterflies all over again.

Hannibal tugged gently at a curl. “We’ll have to tie this back. Ponytail, pigtails, or a braid?”

Will held up two fingers, as much to signify he’d decided on the second option as to express to Hannibal how many tails he wished to have. He enjoyed Hannibal braiding his hair, more than he knew how to express, but he was worried that should they take the time to do it properly now, he’d panic himself out of going into the water at all.

And he didn’t want that. Not today.

He watched as Hannibal produced two bands from the bag he’d brought to the beach with them, and obediently turned his back so that Hannibal could corral his hair into some semblance of order.

Will felt giddy, he felt so free. He wanted to splash around in the shallow water, to dig his feet into the sand and watch as wave after wave dug him in even deeper, he wanted to float with all his limbs akimbo and close his eyes to the dazzling sun and just *be.*

By the time Hannibal started to remove his own shirt, Will was squirming about, desperate to rush off. But he didn’t want to go without Hannibal, without Daddy.

He hopped from foot to foot, digging his bare toes into the soft sand, his bathing suit skirt shifting around his thighs. It was the shortest thing he owned, besides his nighties, and it was still so odd to see expanses of smooth skin next to Hannibal’s far more hirsute figure.

Will had come to love it, though. When he felt soft, delicate, every touch was magnified, whether it be intimacy or just affection. Hannibal laced their hands together, their arms brushing as he led Will to the water.

It was cool, warmed slightly by the sun but not enough that Will didn’t let out a squeak as he was pulled in, deeper and deeper, refreshing water reaching his hips, his waist. The waves lapped gently against him, and Will wanted to sink into them and stay there, in the soothing quiet of the sea.

As he stood there, side by side with Hannibal, another urge found him. This one was older, more hazy around the edges. The sort of thought he tried not to give in to very often. It was *possible* , yes, but neither comfortable nor feasible to incorporate into their lives. But Will *wanted*…

“A little deeper?” Will requested, tugging at Hannibal’s wrist, head down, eyes averted.

Hannibal squeezed his hand and allowed himself to be led this time. Deep enough that the water was almost to their armpits. Only then did Will stop and turn and look up at Hannibal with a smile and lean in. His arms wrapped around Hannibal’s shoulders, palms cupping the opposite elbow, but instead of just allowing Hannibal to hug him back, Will pushed up in his toes and wrapped his legs around Hannibal’s hips as well.

The water took most of his weight, his body buoyant in the gentle waves, and it took only a moment for Hannibal to understand what Will wanted and to move to accommodate.

Hands that usually pressed warm to the base of Will’s back cupped his thighs to hoist him a little higher, then one arm remained there, supporting Will’s butt, as the other wrapped around Will’s shoulders to hold him close.

In the water, Will was as weightless as he imagined himself to be when he was small. He was light enough for Hannibal to hold him this way without effort, to start to sway slightly with the motion of the waves, and cradle him near as though Will really were a toddler, a little girl clinging to her Daddy for comfort.

“Sweet girl,” Hannibal whispered, tucking his nose into Will’s curls. “My sweet girl.”

Will closed his eyes against a sudden wave of agonized joy, tears welling up, salty and hot.

Someone had held him, just like this, he was sure. He could, if he thought very hard, almost remember what it had felt like. He could smell perfume on the wind. One day, someone had set him down and never picked him back up again.

Now, he was nearly six feet tall. Hannibal had lifted him on occasion, and Will knew he would have *wanted* to do it more often, but it simply wasn’t feasible. Will was heavy. Hannibal was strong, but he was also nearing fifty years old, and only a scant few inches taller than Will. Physics and gravity conspired against them.

Will wanted to be held so very *badly* , though. Hannibal rocked him among the waves, lips pressed to Will’s temple, breathing him in as Will clung. He never wanted to leave the sea. He wanted to stay here, where he was small, light, cared for.

“I love you,” Will whispered, and it didn’t feel like enough. He didn’t feel like he could possibly convey just what Hannibal meant to him, how great a gift Hannibal had given him.

Will felt loved, both as a child and as a partner. He felt thoroughly, intimately enmeshed. He was not sure either of them would have survived separation, at this point. They were too close, too intrinsically linked. It was as terrifying as it was reassuring.

“I love you too, sweetheart,” Hannibal breathed against him, turning on the spot so that the sun wasn’t in Will’s eyes as much. “More than I can put into words.”

And that was the simple truth of it. Hannibal knew he loved Will, he’d fallen in love with him quickly and had been over the moon when Will not only told him he felt the same but showed him, daily. As his lover and partner, as his little girl…

Hannibal felt overwhelmed for a moment, just as struck as Will had been by the power of a simple cuddle. His love for Will was infinite yet entirely different for every aspect of him. There was a desire to protect, to care for and nurture, so strong that it stunned Hannibal dumb once in a while when he saw how much Will had grown, had allowed himself to be guided. That desire was present when Will was an adult, but it was muted, and instead the desire to share himself entirely came to the fore; to be entwined with Will in every way each allowed and craved.

He wondered if there was anything else in the world that was so simple and so complex as to love someone.

How long they stood in the water, neither were sure, but it was Will in the end who wriggled free and allowed himself to sink beneath the water for just a moment, coming up with wet pigtails and bright eyes.

“I bet I can swim faster than you Daddy!” he teased.

The heavy tension of the moment broke, the bubble popping, and the world rushed back in.

The joy, though, that stayed. It was impossible to not feel a smile tugging at his lips, as Will splashed about, racing him back to the shore and then tackling him back into the water, in and out of the waves, hair damp and plastered against his shoulders.

They swam until Will’s cheeks were flushed and his shoulders were going a bit pink around the straps, and then Hannibal herded him back towards the house, shielded from the sun by his shirt and hat once more. In the doorway, Hannibal kissed his forehead and nudged him towards the stairs. “Get changed and bring me your hairbrush. I’ll make lunch.”

Will grinned, pushing up onto his toes to steal a proper kiss. “Yes, Daddy.”

Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

For a moment, both halves of Will were at war. He had a sudden, white-hot desire to tumble Hannibal into the bed, to make a mess of the things he already wore.

Then that feeling settled, into a more muted warmth. Desire was still present low in his belly, but it was a comfortable longing, one he could put off until later. He really did want to see this through, to have Hannibal out with him as his Daddy, to do the sorts of things they never got to do when he was small.

"Okay," Will said, holding his arms up. "Let's try it."

Chapter Notes

No kink in this chapter, but there is an implication of arousal while somewhat Little, just in case that isn't your thing :) this is mostly between Little-space and not. They're starting to blur a little for Will.

There was a fireworks show announced in the local paper. Will had found it when he'd gone to get the paper dressed only in his boxers, one of Hannibal's delicious pieces of French toast in his mouth.

"We should go," he suggested later that day, licking ice cream off his spoon as he and Hannibal sat with the French doors open, just their feet in the afternoon sun.

"I'd be happy to accompany you," Hannibal replied, eyes narrowed in amusement when Will snorted and gently shoved their shoulders together. "Or take you, depending on how you feel."

"Actually," Will drew the tip of his finger around the rim of the ramekin before setting his spoon back into it. "I was hoping we could… try something."

"Oh?"

Will had grown more confident after building sandcastles together, and Hannibal watched him with his head tilted and eyes at half-mast. When he spoke, Will's cheeks warmed, and he avoided Hannibal's eyes.

“Maybe you could talk to me out there like you do in here, sometimes?” Will offered quietly. “Not loudly not enough… not enough for others but just so I can hear?”

Hannibal reached for Will, twining their fingers together. He brought Will’s hand up to his mouth, brushing his lips along the knuckles. “Would you like me to take care of you, sweetheart?”

Will’s cheeks tinted pink, and he rolled his eyes half-heartedly. “Not *now* ,” he protested, though he made no move to free his hand from Hannibal’s.

“But tonight,” Hannibal pressed. “I think my little girl would enjoy the fireworks. And perhaps the boardwalk, if she feels brave enough.”

Will eyed him, taking in the calculated narrowing of his eyes. “You’ve been waiting for this,” he deduced.

“I had hoped,” Hannibal said. “And I would have suggested it myself in another day or so, if I thought you would be amenable.”

Will hummed and freed his hand, leaning in to kiss Hannibal on the cheek a moment later. He took their dishes to the kitchen to wash them and leave them on the rack to dry. Hannibal didn't follow him, and Will was grateful.

By the time he returned, his heart wasn't trying to best its way out of his throat anymore, and he settled comfortably next to Hannibal again.

"Alright," he said, tucking his head against Hannibal's shoulder. "Take me to see the fireworks."

In the time they'd been in the little house together, the lines between Will's adult self and his little self had begun to blur more easily than they did at home. It wasn't that Will felt safer dropping here than he did there, but that he wasn't required to ever *be* an adult here. Should he have chosen not to come up at all the entire time, he knew that Hannibal would have had it totally under control.

He just enjoyed spending time with Hannibal in any and every way possible, and wouldn't squander the precious days they'd clawed for themselves out of their busy lives on just being small.

They talked quietly for a little while, until the heat of the day dropped them off into a comfortable doze against each other on the sofa. Will woke first, and spent some time just watching Hannibal sleep, his face relaxed, eyes moving under their lids.

Will had never known he was missing anything. Companionship, maybe, but he’d long since decided that was simply something he didn’t get to have. Hannibal had changed all that, marching right into Will’s life, barreling through his walls.

Hannibal was graceful, polite, and poised in everything he did, but he was also stubborn as a mule, and he never changed his mind once it had been made up. He’d wanted Will the minute

he saw him, and he'd pursued him single-mindedly from that point.

It had been impossible to ignore, even for a man like Will. *Especially* for a man like Will, isolated, underfed, undervalued. Hannibal had offered attention and affection in kind, and even before all this, Will had turned toward it like a sunflower following the sun.

And then Hannibal had slowly inserted softness into Will's life. Delicate trappings, comforts Will had never before been allowed.

No going back now. Hannibal had shown Will something he hadn't even known to want, and now he held tight to it with both hands, knowing Hannibal would allow it. That Hannibal would *encourage* it.

Incorporating their dynamic subtly into their outside lives had been lingering on Will's mind for a while now, but he also knew Hannibal. He knew how to recognize Hannibal's expressions, when he was longing for something. Sometimes, when they were out and about, Hannibal gave him a look that was so very much Will's *Daddy* that it made him weak at the knees.

And now… now he'd give into it, now he'd let it happen, come what may.

Because Hannibal would keep him safe. He always did.

Will leaned in to kiss him awake, smiling when Hannibal immediately wrapped his arms around Will to keep him close, then he just leaned near to nuzzle him.

"We should get ready," he murmured after a while, giving Hannibal a look. *Getting ready* was a process, almost a ritual for them; often done when Will was still his adult self before he sunk, at the end, to be Daddy's little girl. Now, though, Will knew he wouldn't slip into that mindset, not fully.

It would be just as new as when he'd first felt aroused as a Little, and just as exciting to experience .

Getting ready meant Will got a long soak in the bath, while Hannibal shaved his legs, and under his arms. Then he'd wash Will's hair, help him out of the tub and shave his face next. After that came the clothes, things that usually put Will right into his headspace; soft underthings, frilly dresses, bows in his hair, long socks, mary janes…

But today… today was a little different.

After the bath, shaved smooth and washed clean, Will found a pair of bloomer-like panties and long socks with bows at the top waiting for him on the bed. He grinned, ducking his head and pressing his knuckles to his warm cheeks, and waited for Hannibal to join him in the bedroom to dress him.

"Gauge your comfort level for me," Hannibal instructed, kneeling before Will to guide each foot into a leg of the panties. "Would you be willing to allow me a bit of leeway in your clothing, or would you prefer to be entirely in your grown-up things?"

Will racked his brain for the clothes he owned, trying to remember if he had anything *effeminate* but not, technically, for little girls . He couldn't remember, and he had no idea what had wound up in the bags Hannibal packed.

He'd never been known for dressing in anything other than his work clothes, slightly worn and distinctly masculine. But he wasn't *known* for anything around here.

"I don't know," he finally said, voice small and uncertain.

"Then we shall pick together," Hannibal said, sliding the panties up Will's legs, smoothing out the wrinkles around his hips. The intimacy always left Will a little lightheaded, and he was grateful to be guided to sit on the bed.

"It's just…" Will closed his eyes and sucked in a stabilizing breath, holding out a foot for Hannibal to guide the socks up around his knees. "They're all a bit… *loud,* aren't they?"

"You have some simpler things," Hannibal said. "Pastel blues instead of pinks. Plain instead of patterned. But whatever you pick, you will still be my little girl. You won't disappoint me."

Will swallowed hard and nodded again. He understood, logically, that Hannibal would not be disappointed. He hadn't ever been, not once, even when Will had shoved himself out of his headspace so fast he was dizzy from it, even when he'd refused to drop and Hannibal had had to deal with him, grumpy and frazzled and ungrounded.

For the moment he let Hannibal guide his socks up, all the way up to his thighs, and smooth the fabric down there, too. He let himself concentrate on the touches, ground himself in them. He reached out and grasped Hannibal's hand when he took it and squeezed. When he stood, he leaned in and kissed Will on the forehead, letting his lips linger.

"I know," he murmured with a smile, pulling back and cupping Will's cheek. "I know what we'll do."

He moved to the closet and took from it something Will had seen a few times but never worn. It was feminine, but older; something Daddy's little girl wouldn't wear, but something Will could, if he wanted. Under his clothes. Hidden away. Soft and safe against his skin.

It was more camisole than bra, with flowy lavender fabric that would hang over his stomach, but the cups were still there. They were soft and flat, meant for someone like Will with no chest to speak of, but distinctly present. Will flushed pink.

"We didn't try that yet," he said, though his fingers were itching to reach out and caress the silky fabric.

"We didn't," Hannibal agreed. "But I thought, perhaps, something you could wear just for the two of us. Something to remind you of who you are to me, when no one else can see.

For a moment, both halves of Will were at war. He had a sudden, white-hot desire to tumble Hannibal into the bed, to make a mess of the things he already wore.

Then that feeling settled, into a more muted warmth. Desire was still present low in his belly, but it was a comfortable longing, one he could put off until later. He really *did* want to see this through, to have Hannibal out with him as his Daddy, to do the sorts of things they never got to do when he was small.

“Okay,” Will said, holding his arms up. “Let’s try it.”

Hannibal considered Will for just a moment before leaning in to kiss his cheek. He didn’t ask him if he was sure. He knew Will enough, he knew that when he decided something he was certain. He knew that should Will wish to stop, he had a word and his trust in Hannibal to protect him.

He eased the flimsy fabric over Will’s head, guiding his arms through as well, and let it fall against him. Will adjusted it on himself, eyes down and hands gentle as he touched this new thing, touched himself through it. It made him shiver and smile at the same time, and he looked up at Hannibal with a helpless smile.

“This is so strange,” he admitted, but he didn’t ask to be undressed again, he didn’t ask for anything to change. He stood up and considered himself this way as well, before moving to the mirror to have a look at himself.

Outside of panties, Will didn’t feminize himself in his adult life. He saw no need to. Slowly, he’d started to allow socks to creep into his wardrobe as well, once in a while. But the camisole was new, too new, too strange, and he looked away before he panicked himself out of what they were going to do.

“What next?” he asked, smiling, tugging his hair nervously as Hannibal stepped closer and wrapped his arms around him.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” it came out as a shiver, a breath, but Will tucked himself against Hannibal and closed his eyes, breathing him in. “Yeah,” he added after a moment, much more decisive.

“We’re going to get your adult clothes,” Hannibal said, “But I’m going to be the one to dress you. I know they can be difficult for you when you go under, and I need you to tell me if you become uncomfortable, understood?”

Will nodded against Hannibal’s shoulder. Hannibal turned to tuck his face against Will’s damp curls.

“I mean it, sweetheart. A single word and we’ll come home and get changed.”

“I know,” Will mumbled. “I trust you.”

Hannibal helped Will into jeans and a short-sleeved, lightweight shirt. “Now,” he said, “your hair.”

Will blanched. Normally, he let his hair run wild, even now that it was touching his shoulders. If he had to work in the lab or at a crime scene, he pulled it back into a low

ponytail and tucked the tail under the hem of his jacket. It was only with Hannibal that he approached anything resembling a style, and those…

Braids, pigtails, ribbons. Nothing Will could have managed on his own, nothing he could bear to be seen with in public.

“Just a bun,” Hannibal told him, “to keep the curls out of your eyes. I hear they’re quite fashionable among men, nowadays.”

Typically, those men were a good decade or so younger than Will, but he couldn’t help the fond smile that stole over his features.

He nodded, just once, and moved to sit down so Hannibal could comb his hair and work it into its style for the evening. There was something wonderful about Hannibal playing with his hair, Will could float on that alone. Perhaps it was the care taken, the way Hannibal handled him as though he were fragile, as though he were so absolutely beautiful that he couldn’t bear to do something wrong.

Once Will was ready, Hannibal moved to dress himself. Will sat on the bed, one foot tucked beneath himself, the other leg drawn up so he could rest his chin on his knee and watch. Hannibal moved like a dancer, he was so elegant in everything he did and Will *ached* just watching him. He couldn’t help but smile, but feel his heart speed up just a little at the thought that they were about to go out in public, with Will dressed as he was, knowing what was beneath his flannel and jeans.

“How do we,” he furrowed his brow just a little, shook his head, started again, “what do I call you when we’re out?”

“Anything you like,” Hannibal assured him. “Whatever you feel you want to call me, Will, as always when we’re together.”

Will laughed, helpless, and pressed his lips to his knee as he continued to watch Hannibal. He was putting cufflinks on, for god’s sake. He’d never called him Daddy outside of being Little. He’d wanted to, sometimes it had snuck through, when he was dressed up but feeling horny, when they were balancing along that line of play, but he’d never done it consciously.

Not yet.

Hannibal wasn’t always acting in the role of Will’s Daddy, but he always meant that much to him. There was never a moment when Will didn’t love Hannibal wholeheartedly, with every fiber of his being. Even when he dressed to the nines to go to the *boardwalk* .

“You’re ridiculous,” Will said fondly, when Hannibal seemed to be considering a *tie.*

“I enjoy looking my best.”

“It’s a million degrees out,” Will reminded him. “It’s *August* . And you’d look good in ripped jeans and a stained t-shirt with a cheap beer logo on it, and you *know* it.”

“I assure you that despite what you may have been taught, there isn’t anyone who looks good like that.”

Will rolled his eyes. “Not even me?” He asked, fluttering his eyelashes. “You always tell me how pretty I am.”

Even covered in mud and dog hair, Hannibal never failed to reassure Will. He did so now, though the look on his face said he saw right through Will’s manipulations.

“You would look beautiful in anything,” Hannibal said, cupping Will’s face in his hands and placing a kiss on his forehead. “But we are not all blessed with your features.”

Will laughed again, gently shoving him away. He felt giddy. He felt beautiful. He felt ready to go out. When Hannibal finished making himself far too handsome for his own good, Will was bouncing on his feet, restless and ready to move.

“You better buy me ice cream,” he said. Hannibal gently caught Will’s chin and held him still.

“You better ask me nicely, little one,” he replied, kissing the tip of Will’s nose. When Will caught him to keep him close, Hannibal relented and kissed Will on the lips as well, a gentle and chaste thing.

“I will, Daddy, I promise.” Will whispered. Hannibal kissed him again before he let him go.

The drive wasn’t a long one, they weren’t far from the small township, and by the time they got there it was only just starting to feel like dusk; none of the cars had had the lights on and the streetlamps hadn’t been lit.

There was a nice breeze coming off the water, and all the shorter curls that Will’s bun hadn’t captured were immediately fluttering around his face with every shift and shiver of the wind. Will grinned at Hannibal.

“Where should we go first?” He asked.

The boardwalk stretched for multiple blocks, so far that Will could not see from where they arrived to the end. Even in the parking lot, he could smell a variety of sweet and savory foods on the winds, things he’d had only very rarely in his youth. The sort of foods that would make Hannibal nauseous to even look at.

Will wanted all of them.

Will had looked it up on the ride over, distracting himself from the butterflies in his stomach. There were dozens of little shops, an indoor minigolf course, a handful of arcades, and even a small section with one or two little carnival rides.

Most of that was unlikely to appeal to Hannibal, but Will suspected he could sell him on the ferris wheel. If he seemed small enough and batted his eyelashes enough, Hannibal might even be willing to give Will a few quarters for pinball or to try and win a stuffed animal.

That was a trick Will would have to use sparingly, if he wanted to convince Hannibal to buy him heavily processed candies or greasy foods. And he very much wanted that.

The boardwalk had been an unnecessary expense, and therefore out of Will's grasp for most of his life. As an adult, he hadn't ever seen fit to take a beach trip, and there'd been no one else to go with.

Now, Will felt the stirrings of excitement in his veins, a hungry urge to run full tilt down the block.

He wouldn't, of course. Too many people, too many eyes. But he wanted it.

Hannibal stopped him at the car, ducking his head to be heard as he spoke softly. "Hold my hand, sweetheart. There are too many people, I wouldn't want you to get lost."

Will shivered from head to toe, his lip made its way between his teeth and he smiled. Of course it would start now, it wouldn't be a simple single thing either. He knew that every moment, every motion, would be carefully choreographed.

He couldn't wait.

"Yes, Daddy," he whispered, letting his hand be taken.

This, he'd gotten a little more used to, than the rest. Hannibal wasn't a huge fan of PDA, but he often held Will's hand when they went on dates together. He'd bring their joined hands up to kiss Will's knuckles, he'd nuzzle his hair; gentle shows of possessiveness, of protection, that Will felt to his very bones.

He squeezed Hannibal's hand, and Hannibal squeezed back.

"I thought we could enjoy a walk as the sun sets," Hannibal said, finally answering Will's question. "Perhaps out towards the carnival rides."

Will nodded, grinning. "I like the sound of that."

"Perhaps we could get an ice cream along the way," Hannibal added, tone deliberately vague as he gave Will a sidelong glance.

"I very much like the sound of that."

Will had a dozen other cravings, hungers warring within him for food, for excitement. He tried to imagine Hannibal playing minigolf in a three-piece suit, and had to stifle a laugh in his palm. Hannibal raised an eyebrow.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing," Will said, still grinning. "Will you ride the ferris wheel with me?"

It was a towering thing, visible even from where they stood, and Will knew from the top they'd be able to see out across the sea, a vast expanse of blue, turning black as the sun began

to set.

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully. As if Will didn't know he'd already planned out every step of their evening. Hannibal was particular, in general, and he would have wanted the night to go perfectly for his little girl.

"We'll see," Hannibal said, with a glint in his eyes that Will knew very well. Will grinned, stepping closer to lean his head against Hannibal's shoulder as they walked.

"That means yes," he whispered in a soft, teasing voice. He didn't dare attempt a little girl's voice when he played, but he tended to be softer, sweeter. This was something in between.

Hannibal hummed, pleased, and released Will's hand to wrap his arm around him instead, palm resting warm and wide over Will's hip.

"Clever girl," he whispered back. Will felt his entire body shiver.

No one on the boardwalk gave them even a look. There was nothing off there, nothing strange about two men walking in step, pressed side to side, nothing confronting about their gentle show of affection. Once in a while, they'd stop and just look out at the water, or the people, or Will would point out something on the horizon that Hannibal would narrow his eyes at to see better.

When they reached the first of the food stands, Will gave Hannibal a mischievous look. Hannibal feigned a frown.

"You know we have food at home," he said, raising an eyebrow when Will pouted. The words were unspoken but hung between them regardless: *ask me nicely, sweetheart.* Will chewed his lip for a moment, and decided that a hotdog wasn't worth the risk, not just yet, and they moved on.

He felt a thrill run through him, the way Hannibal spoke to him, as though he were small, as though he were in one of his beautiful dresses pouting in the living room. No one seemed to notice. No one seemed to care.

Will couldn't remember the last time he'd felt so free.

This could be addicting.

If they could pull this off, if Will could be small in public, completely unnoticed, then he could slip in and out whenever he wanted. If he needed a bit of reassurance, he could reach for his Daddy and have that security for a minute.

Will was full of butterflies, excitement a frantic thrum beneath his skin. He wanted everything, he wanted to reach out and take, and know it would be given freely.

And it *would* be given freely. They passed another food stand, the smell of grease potent enough to make Hannibal grimace. Will ground to a halt, caught between the visible deep fryer and the candy shop next door.

Hannibal paused beside him, looking resigned, even as he tightened his grip around Will's waist. "You know what sort of treats you're allowed," he murmured into Will's hair. "I could make you sweets at home."

"Those wouldn't be deep fried," Will whispered back.

"Certainly not."

"I would like some donuts please," Will replied, grinning up at him. Hannibal considered Will for a moment, then another, until Will felt his cheeks burn with the scrutiny, before sighing and turning his gaze to the stallholder.

He bought a bag of six donut holes, freshly fried and covered in cinnamon sugar, and took the bag before Will could grab it. Both thanked the man and stepped away, and Will tried to reach for the bag again. Hannibal clicked his tongue, and Will felt his spine straighten without his express permission.

"Please, Daddy, may I have one?" he asked, quietly enough that no one would overhear, but loud enough that Hannibal heard, that it wasn't a whisper, that it was a genuine request *out in the open.*

Hannibal's expression was unreadable for a moment, something almost like longing there before his smile eased it away. He leaned in and kissed Will on the forehead, just like he did so often at home, just like he did when he was calming a fussy little girl before bedtime that was claimed to be too early.

"I can deny you nothing," he murmured, before holding the bag out for Will to rustle in. As Will enjoyed his terribly unhealthy treat, Hannibal sighed and took one for himself as well, popping it into his mouth and raising an eyebrow when Will's jaw dropped.

"It is not unpleasant," Hannibal admitted after a moment, and Will laughed, bright and loud enough that he slapped his hand against his mouth almost immediately.

Will had felt himself slowly unwinding through the time they'd been here, but it was nice to be reminded that Hannibal, too, was relaxing. That he was taking a break from the stifling confines of everyday life. That he was comfortable, happy, *safe* .

This wasn't just for Will. This was them, this was the life they'd built together. This was *everything* .

End Notes

While Little, Will is a little girl, but this gender play does not come through into his adult life. We approached it this way: Will enjoys being small and cared for, and feels safe with everything Hannibal gives him. Hannibal's aesthetics point to Victorian dolls and pretty girls. Without the costuming, Will would still enjoy himself, but he wants to give Hannibal the pleasure of dressing him up and caring for him.

We don't cover transgender or dysphoria issues in this story.

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